

# bulletin

## of the American Research Center in Egypt

Number 180 - Summer 2001

### Repairs Ancient and Modern in the Great Hypostyle Hall at Karnak

Peter J. Brand

When Seti I built the vast Hypostyle Hall at Karnak, he described it in an architrave inscription as a "mansion of a million years," built throughout of "fine, hard sandstone" in what the Egyptians often called "the good work of eternity." After thirty-three centuries, the Great Hypostyle Hall is in remarkably good shape: most of its walls are intact and all but a handful of its 134 columns, including the 12 great columns that flank the central processional way, still reach their full original height. Yet were it not for extensive repairs by Seti's successors, both ancient and modern, the Hall would be a vast heap of rubble, or, at best, a romantic ruin like the Ramesseum. As part of its mission to record and study the monument, the Karnak Great Hypostyle Hall Project of the



Workmen replacing the crumbling ancient column foundations in the Hypostyle Hall at Karnak with new ones of fired brick, ca. 1900.  
©CNRS/CFEETK—Archives Legrain

University of Memphis is shedding new light on these restorations and contributing, in turn, to the present-day restoration of this wonder of the ancient world.

During the centuries following the collapse of Egypt's New Kingdom in 1085 BCE, the monuments of Thebes suffered from neglect and in some instances deliberate destruction. Many Theban monuments were damaged in series of local rebellions against the priestly and royal authorities of the Third Intermediate Period and, later, foreign invasions, particularly the sack of Thebes in 663 by the Assyrian king Ashurbanipal, who laid waste to much of the city.

Most of the damage to the Hypostyle Hall during the first millennium BCE was concentrated in the gates and passageways of Second and Third Pylons at the Hall's west and east entrances respectively. During at least one of the episodes of civil and military disorder at Thebes, the great wooden doorways and their flag masts, as well as those of the other Karnak pylons, were deliberately burned. The intense heat of these conflagrations, stoked by abundant fuel, ruptured the stone, causing it literally to explode. In the passageway through the Second Pylon, the doors must

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## From the director

Many of the authors in this issue of the *Bulletin of the American Research Center in Egypt* (formerly the *Newsletter*) describe the unexpected pleasures of encountering a past that constantly abuts other pasts and the present. Peter Brand marks the evidence of restorers like him, stretching back four thousand years, at the Hypostyle Hall in Karnak; Ray Johnson's conser-  
vation team finds that other, ancient teams have left traces of their work in the Small Temple of Amun at Medinet Habu; Zuzana Skalova, attending a service in an eighteenth-century Coptic church, discovers an image yet older in a side chapel, calling in mute elo-  
quence across seven centuries; Jere Bacharach discerns curious affinities in the look of coins minted by inimical political dynasties and finds an explanation in the reas-  
surances of familiarity and continuity; Karen Mathews, exploring a fifteenth-century Mamluk mosque, is aston-  
ished by a sultan's immoderate delight in crafted mate-  
rials of venerable ancestry; Ola Seif and Seif El Rashidi, chancing on architectural drawings in an old Cairo junkshop, bring to light the story of a Francophile Egyptian architect who forever changed Cairo's skyline while engaging with an older tradition.

The experiences that these authors describe are char-  
acteristic of daily life in Egypt, where antiquity insistently engages, sometimes amiably, sometimes less so, with the present. ARCE has been fortunate over the course of

fifty-two years in its uninterrupted, amiable engagement with Egypt. Our board of governors, our institutional and individual members, our enthusiastic chapters in the United States, and our staff have all contributed to this endeavor, but also the people who form part of ARCE's broader community within Egypt and America. Daniel Kurtzer's term as U.S. ambassador to Egypt ended in June, and he has been a loyal supporter of our efforts during his four-year tenure; we wish him well in his new post and welcome our new ambassador, David Welch. Prof. Dr. Gaballa 'Ali Gaballa, Secretary General of the Supreme Council of Antiquities, for more than two years has been a steady friend, enthusiastic in his sup-  
port of our member expeditions, our conservation pro-  
jects, and our fellowship program. Bill Pearson of USAID and his staff have been stalwart champions of our Egyptian Antiquities Project and Antiquities Development Project. We have also been favored by the generosity of our corporate friends, among them, Abercrombie & Kent and General Motors Egypt. Finally, the swelling audiences at our weekly seminars, com-  
posed of all nationalities, of all ages, and of all profes-  
sions, have spilled the series out of the conference room and into the grand salon, and attest to the enduring and amiable engagement of ARCE's relationship with Egypt.

Robert D. Springborg

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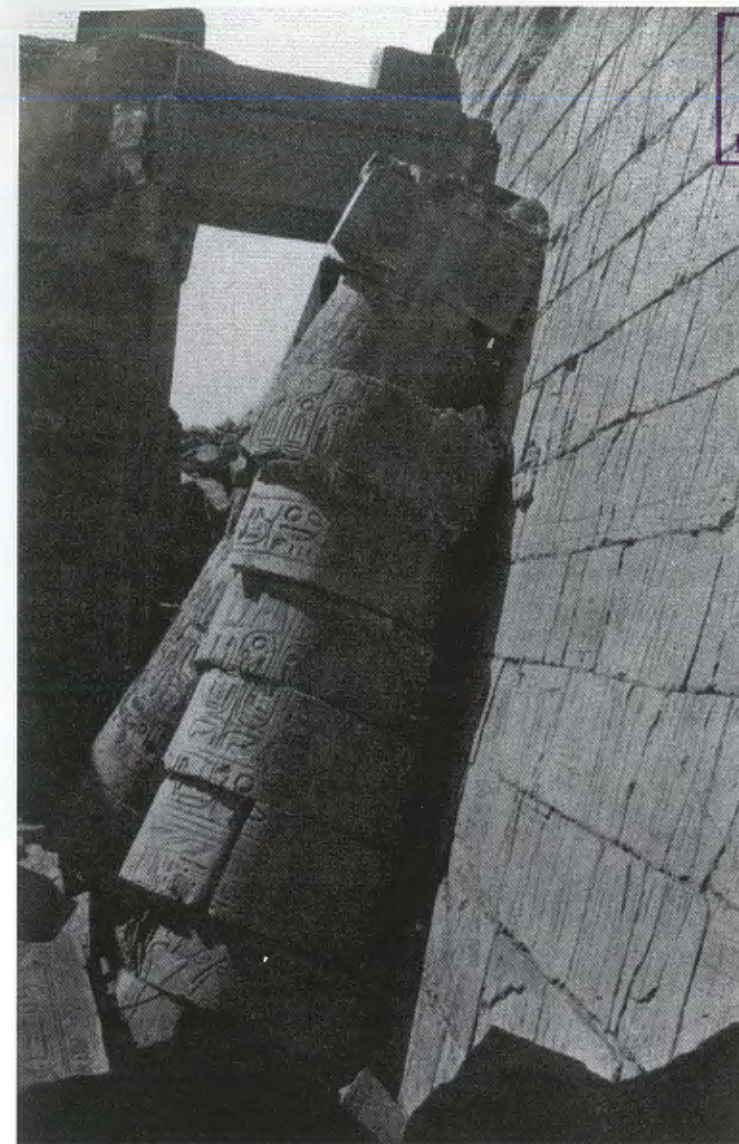
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### Exhibitions



have been lying open when they  
burned, for the surface of the large  
recesses within which they nested—  
the so-called shadow of the door—  
was also shattered, along with the  
doors' towerlike mounts. So exten-  
sive was the destruction wrought by  
these fires that the mounts for the  
doors had to be entirely rebuilt and  
the door recesses resurfaced. This  
was accomplished only under  
Ptolemy VI, after the gateway had  
lain in ruin for more than three cen-  
turies. The new gateway is decorated  
in a typically Ptolemaic style: high,  
well-modeled reliefs depict the king  
venerating various gods; hieroglyph-  
ic texts are arranged in a dense—  
even cramped—style. The door  
recesses in the Second Pylon were  
badly damaged after it was restored,

but enough of the decoration sur-  
vives to show that some Ptolemaic  
king had repaired these as well.

Several hundred years after it  
was inscribed by the first Rames-  
sides, the eastern passageway of the  
Second Pylon, beyond the recess of  
the gate and at the entrance of the  
Hypostyle Hall proper, suffered a  
quite separate catastrophic inci-  
dent: a structural failure unrelated  
to the fires in the gateway. At some  
point, an abacus—one of the square  
blocks that sit atop each of the  
columns in the Hypostyle Hall and  
upon which the architraves are situ-  
ated—failed on the second of the  
great columns on the north side of  
the central nave. The two archi-  
traves that rest atop the abacus of  
column 2 were not positioned even-

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ly, so that one side of the block  
bore too much weight and eventu-  
ally crumbled. The resulting chain  
reaction brought down many of the  
roofing slabs supported by these  
architraves. As they fell, the ceiling  
slabs, in turn, broke large pieces off  
the wide capitals of four of the  
great columns and damaged the  
reliefs at the bases of their shafts.  
The collapse of the roof extended  
beyond the Hall proper into the  
eastern passageway of the Second  
Pylon, severely damaging the reliefs  
here, especially toward the top of  
the walls.

An ambitious program of rebuild-  
ing was mounted during the Græco-  
Roman period to set this destruc-  
tion right. The crumbled abacus  
atop column 2 was replaced, and  
the broken umbels were replaced  
with large semicircular and wedge-  
shaped patches that were all left  
uninscribed, making them easy to  
identify. At the base of the four  
westernmost great columns, small  
patch stones were inserted into the  
damaged areas to replace the huge  
original semicircular column-drum  
sections defaced by the collapse.  
The repairs themselves are carefully  
done; it must have involved a con-  
siderable engineering effort to  
remove and insert stone into the  
lower shafts of the giant standing  
columns. It is surprising, then, that  
little effort was expended on redeco-  
rating the newly repaired columns.  
Only the right side of a large  
prenomen cartouche of Ramesses II  
and the falcon of his Horus name  
were recarved. All the rest of the  
repaired surfaces were left blank.

The same is not true of the east-  
ern passageway of the Second  
Pylon immediately to the west of  
these four columns. Here, Ptolemy  
VI entirely replaced the Nine-  
teenth-Dynasty reliefs damaged by

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is director of the Karnak  
Hypostyle Hall Project of the  
University of Memphis,  
Tennessee. His *Monuments of  
Seti I: Epigraphic, Historical,  
and Art Historical Analysis* was  
published in 2000 by Brill.

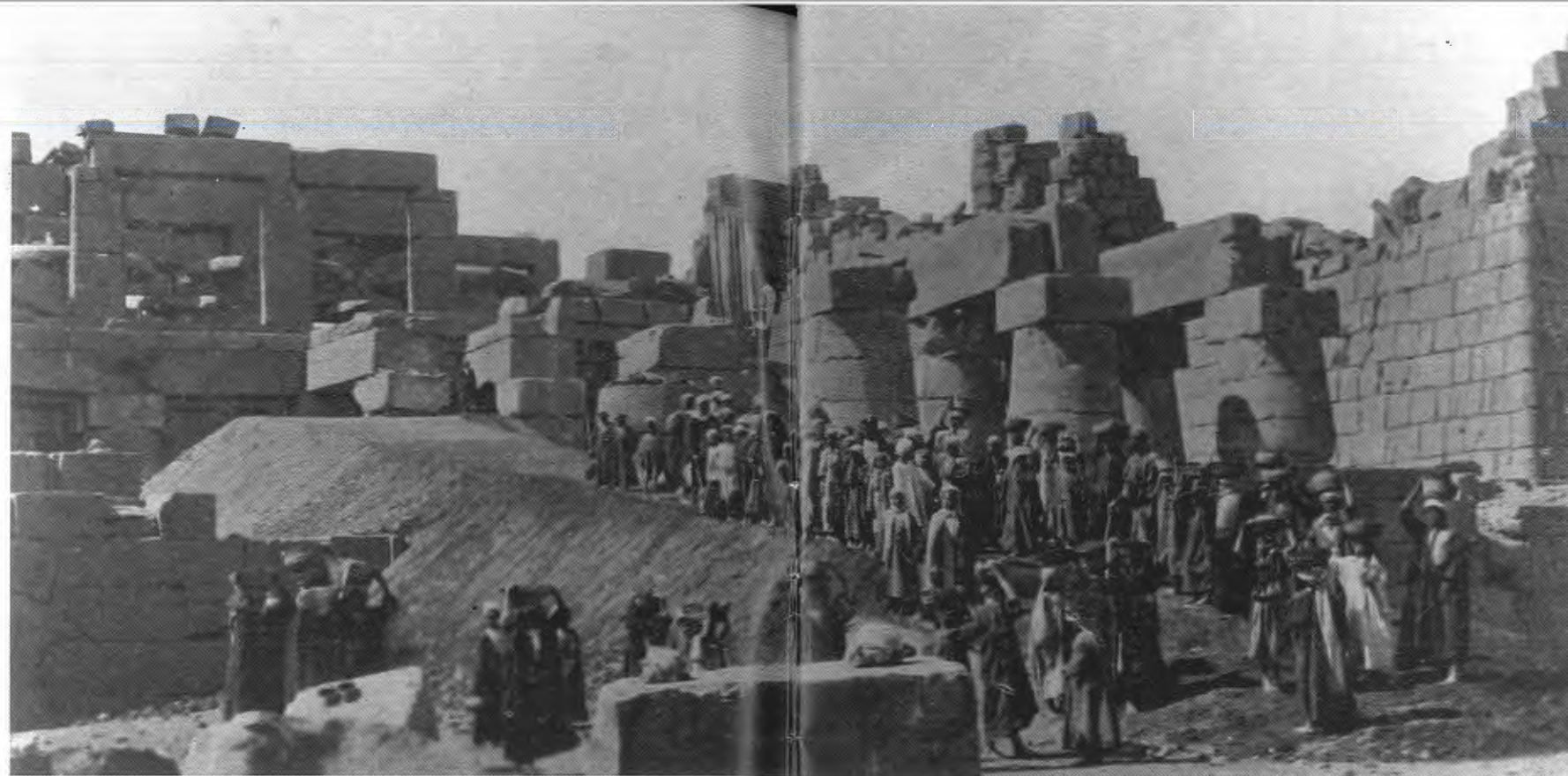
Two columns from the north  
wing of the Hypostyle Hall  
at Karnak, which collapsed  
in October 1899, lying  
against the north tower of  
the Second Pylon. ca. 1900.  
©CHRS/CFEETK-Archives  
Legrain



Egyptian workmen on an earthen ramp used to rebuild the columns and architraves in the north wing of the Hypostyle Hall at Karnak, ca. 1900.  
© CNRS/CFEETK—Archives Chevrier

the roof's collapse. For the most part, he was quite conscientious in re-creating the original reliefs as he understood them to have looked before the disaster. The reliefs have a Ptolemaic "look" to them, but the proportions of the figures and the arrangement and style of the hieroglyphs are deliberately New Kingdom in flavor. Moreover, the reliefs name Ramesses II, the king whose name Ptolemy found in the cartouches. In fact, the original New Kingdom reliefs had been usurped by Ramesses II from his grandfather Ramesses I, traces of whose name were discovered when the Karnak Hypostyle Hall Project made facsimile copies of these reliefs in the early 1990s. Ramesses I's scenes in the passageway were executed in raised relief. Later, his like-named grandson merely shaved the raised signs of Ramesses I's name off inside the cartouche rings and cut his own name in sunk relief in their place. But raised relief often has a shallow incised outline that can remain even after the raised portion is sliced off.

In restoring the damaged scenes, Ptolemy VI's sculptors closely followed the outlines of the damaged originals. In cases where the damage was not as severe, they even "recycled" individual hieroglyphs, which are somewhat flatter and less elaborate than the baroque Ptolemaic hieroglyphs. To preserve the original appearance of these usurped cartouches as much as possible, Ptolemy left the signs inside the rings of the cartouches largely untouched, except for some minor retouching to the original Ramesside glyphs to make them look "contemporary." The usurped cartouches were inscribed in sunk relief; the rest of the original and final versions of the scenes were in raised relief. The result is that the background of these



usurped cartouches is higher than that of the surrounding relief, giving them a doubly odd appearance. Ironically, Ptolemy's conscientious effort to preserve the original appearance of the scenes has preserved the evidence of their usurpation by Ramesses III. The only exception is near the top of the wall where a decorative frieze of large cartouches is interspersed with *khoker* signs, and in the scenes immediately below, where the collapse of the roof had damaged the reliefs so badly that the original cartouches could not be recycled. Instead, the restorers completely recut them, thereby removing any trace of the erased name of Ramesses I. From stray traces of the earlier version that survive all over these scenes, we can be sure that Ptolemy VI was largely faithful to the Ramesside original. Still, he could not resist the temptation to make a few changes, so he inserted himself into the decorative program in three places. His reliefs are easily distinguished from those of Ramesses II by their tall, narrow cartouches, distinctive Ptolemaic headgear, and the

cramped and minuscule style of the hieroglyphs that gloss these scenes.

Sometime during the Græco-Roman era, repairs were also made at the opposite end of the Hypostyle Hall in the entryway of the Third Pylon. Today, the pylon is largely destroyed, and only the lowermost courses of the structure remain, making it difficult to reconstruct the ancient repairs made to it. It is clear, however, that the passageway and vestibule were substantially rebuilt and that the two easternmost great columns were also mended after some catastrophic incident had severely damaged them. The roof of the Third Pylon's vestibule and the doors of the gateway were built of wood, and the damage to this part of the Hall was likely the result of a deliberately set fire, not a structural failure. The masonry in the eastern sides of these two columns was entirely replaced, with small blocks substituted for the original large semi-circular column drums. The facade of the vestibule was also extended so that it melded to the columns. But the whole project was inexplicably left unfinished, the replacement blocks

left rough and uninscribed.

By the time the Roman emperors replaced the Græco-Macedonian pharaohs as rulers of Egypt, the Hypostyle Hall was already thirteen hundred years old. By this time, natural as well as human forces had acted to degrade the structure. A problem that is all too familiar today had already inflicted structural damage: the infiltration of salt-laden moisture into the foundations and lower reaches of the walls. The constant dissolution and recrystallization of the salts imbedded in the sandstone gradually degraded the stone; not only were the reliefs and inscriptions along the base of the wall obliterated, but the structural integrity of the Hall itself was jeopardized. At some point in the Græco-Roman era, large expanses of the lower courses of the Hypostyle Hall were replaced with new stone. For the most part, the new blocks were left blank, perhaps because the original decoration had been so destroyed that the restorers simply did not know what to inscribe there. Enough of the original masonry survives in various places through-

out the Hall to show that what is missing are stereotyped inscriptions of the high priest of Amen-Re and self-styled "king" Herihor, a contemporary of the late Twentieth Dynasty. But along the base of the south interior wall, some effort was made to complete the damaged scenes just above Herihor's lost texts. Here, the king and gods are often shown "flat footed," with no indication of the arch of the foot. But all five toes of their left feet are carefully shown in relief, a detail typical of Ptolemaic art. In one of the scenes at the far western end of the south wall, Ramesses II kneels before the Theban Triad while the god Thoth counts notches on a palm frond, symbolizing the long years of Ramesses' reign. At the base of the palm branch, a tadpole sits atop the hieroglyphic sign *shen*, a reference to the vast temporal and geographic scope of the king's reign. The tadpole itself represents the number 10,000 as the wished-for length of pharaoh's rule. The tadpole and the lower half of Ramesses' cartouche next to it are carved in a Græco-Roman style different from the

Ramesside mode of the rest of the scene.

Thanks to the conscientious restoration work of the Græco-Roman pharaohs, the Great Hypostyle Hall was able to survive a further two millennia of human neglect and wear and tear from the elements. By the Middle Ages, much of the structure was half-buried under wind-borne sand and debris from a village that occupied the site for several centuries. European travelers who visited Karnak in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries reported that much of the Hall's roof was still intact and noted the spectacular preservation of color in reliefs on the walls and columns. European interest in and study of all things Egyptian exploded during the nineteenth century in the wake of the great Napoleonic expedition of savants and scholarly forays by Jean-Francois Champollion, Karl Richard Lepsius, Ippolito Rosellini, and others, who recorded the reliefs and inscriptions on Egyptian monuments, including views and scenes from the Karnak Hypostyle Hall.

By the end of the nineteenth century the newly founded Egyptian Antiquities Organization (EAO) had begun the systematic excavation and preservation of Egypt's monumental legacy. Restoration work at Karnak was given new impetus when sudden disaster struck the Hypostyle Hall. On 3 October 1899 eleven columns in the northern wing collapsed in a chain reaction when their foundations—built of *talatat*, the small blocks taken from the dismantled monuments of Akhenaten—crumbled after centuries of exposure to salt infiltration. As a result of this incident, the EAO undertook systematic repairs to the entire building, work that continues to this day under the joint ægis of the



## PROJECT PERSONNEL

2000 season  
Director: William J. Mumane (†)  
Egyptologists: Peter J. Brand and Janusz Karkowski

SCA inspector: Abdel Sator  
Graduate students: Jane Hill and Tommy Hillburn

2001 season  
Director: Peter J. Brand  
SCA inspector: Abdin Mahfoud

Supreme Council of Antiquities (the EAO's successor) and the Centre Franco-Égyptien d'Études des Temples de Karnak.

The first and most crucial stages of this restoration work were directed by the French Egyptologist Georges Legrain when the northern half of the Hall was rebuilt. Faced with the huge task of re-erecting dozens of columns and architraves, Legrain endeavored to apply theories of how such work had been carried out in antiquity through the use of earthen ramps and embankments. To accomplish this, and using only a few metal tools unknown to the ancients, local workers were employed to build the ramps and move column sections and architrave blocks into position after burying the Hypostyle Hall under thousands of tons of earth.

Over the course of the twentieth century, successive teams of French and Egyptian architects and Egyptologists have practically rebuilt the Hypostyle Hall. Most important was the repair of the foundations. After the October 1899 collapse, work began to systematically replace the crumbling foundations of ancient *talatat* blocks with more durable and stable fired brick. Incredibly, the foundations of the walls and of many of the 134 columns were replaced without dismantling them. This work continued for nearly half a century until it was complete. At the same time, the Second and Third Pylons were also dismantled and rebuilt, at which point a treasure trove of thousands of inscribed blocks was recovered from the bowels of the pylons, where they had been reused as "stuffing." The blocks derive from several dismantled Twelfth- and Eighteenth-Dynasty monuments, including those of Senwosret I,

Amenhotep, Hatshepsut, Akhenaten, and Tutankhamen.

Annual reports on this restoration work were published in successive volumes of the *Annales du Service des Antiquités de L'Égypte*, and dozens of photographs of the work are preserved in the archives of the Centre Franco-Égyptien in Luxor. Despite this record, some confusion still remains as to the precise scope of this huge program of repairs. This uncertainty even has historical implications, since the building history of the Hypostyle Hall remains in dispute. In particular, it has long been suggested that the central row of great columns was originally set up by Amenhotep III or, some say, Horemheb. The resemblance of the central nave of the Hall to the colonnade of Amenhotep III at Luxor Temple has long sparked the imagination of Egyptologists. The main piece of evidence cited for this theory is the reported difference in the foundations of the great columns from those of the 122 smaller ones to either side. Whereas the smaller columns were supported by *talatat* from the monuments of Akhenaten, indicating that the columns must be post-Amarna constructions, it was claimed that the great columns were built on foundations of fired brick. It is unlikely that this supports a claim for Amenhotep III as the builder of the great columns: fired brick was rarely used in the New Kingdom. Two alternate explanations are far more likely to account for the brick foundations of the great columns. The foundations might constitute sparsely documented repairs undertaken in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Alternately, they could represent part of the extensive repairs to the Hypostyle Hall made

during the Græco-Roman era, when fired brick was far more common.

The Great Hypostyle Hall at Karnak stands today as an architectural wonder, testimony to the skill and energy of its Ramesside builders. Yet were it not for the care and ingenuity of those stewards, both ancient and modern, who inherited it, the Hall would not be standing at all. As the SCA and Centre Franco-Égyptien continue to maintain the edifice and conserve its reliefs, the Karnak Hypostyle Hall Project of the University of Memphis, Tennessee, seeks to preserve the historical record inscribed on every surface of the building.

Work has proceeded on several fronts: copying of reliefs in the passageway of the Second Pylon has been completed, and collation of the war scenes of Ramesses II on the south exterior wall is underway. Most recently, we have begun conservation of loose blocks from the north wall of the building lying in the yard to its north. These had tumbled or been removed from the top of the wall and have lain neglected for a century following the reconstruction work of Legrain and his successors. Partly buried and exposed to groundwater, many have suffered salt damage or split into two or more pieces. Most of these have recently been moved by the Centre Franco-Égyptien to waterproof platforms, but dozens were too fragile to move. In spring of 2000 the endangered blocks were freed of dirt and weeds and physically consolidated with chemicals to stabilize them. Photographs and preliminary drawings were also begun, and it is hoped that after the scenes are reconstructed on paper, the blocks may one day be replaced atop the north wall, thereby continuing three millennia of restorations to this magnificent structure. ■

## Annual Meeting



ARCE's fifty-second annual meeting, jointly hosted by Brown University's Department of Egyptology and the Watson Institute for International Affairs, took place from April 27 to 29 on a lovely spring weekend in Providence, Rhode Island. Attendance this year neared three hundred, and the meeting attracted participants from the United States, Canada, England, France, Germany, and Egypt.

Brown University vice president William Simmons, Watson Institute acting president Abbott Gleason, and ARCE president Richard Fazzini welcomed the attendees on Friday afternoon at Alumnae Hall on the old Pembroke campus, after which ARCE director Robert Springborg reviewed the Center's activities over the past year and sketched plans for the years ahead. Robert Vincent briefed the audience on the remarkable work of ARCE's Egyptian Antiquities Project and Antiquities Development Project; an elegant reception hosted by Brown University followed.

Leonard Lesko, Charles Edwin Wilbour Professor of Egyptology and chairman of Brown University's Egyptology department gave the keynote address on Saturday afternoon. His presentation, titled "Egyptology and the Academy," examined the challenges facing the profession and the vital role that universities play in developing the field. The evening events, a reception featuring *oud*-player Mitchell Kaltsunas and a banquet, were hosted by ARCE and offered participants a hospitable environment in which to make or renew acquaintance.

Eighty-five papers were presented over the course of the meeting, which was divided into topical sessions: archaeological field reports; religion and philosophy; art, architecture, and art history; philology, scientific methods (anthropology; astronomy, chronology, and mathematics); and medieval and modern Egypt. Copies of the program booklet containing abstracts of all the papers are available from ARCE's U.S. office.

Several graduate and undergraduate students at Brown University vol-

unteered their services both before and during the meeting: Kelly-Ann Diamond and Andreas Woods provided pre-meeting assistance and helped at registration; Mariam Ayad, Ann Gossett, Gloria Gutierrez, Cayce Harness, Ruth Kramer, Marc LeBlanc, Kerry Verrone, and Clemency Williams helped ensure that the sessions went smoothly.

Carolyn Tomaselli and Susanne Thomas of ARCE's U.S. staff worked long hours and many weekends preparing the meeting and its publications, and coordinating registration and on-site logistics.

Finally, we owe a great debt of gratitude to Barbara Lesko, office coordinator and research assistant in Brown University's Department of Egyptology, who met the myriad tasks associated with organizing the meeting with grace, tact, and immense energy: selecting abstracts, along with Leonard Lesko; scheduling speakers, including the Thursday evening special lecture by Professor Alain Zivie of the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique; reserving rooms for the panels; coordinating the speakers' program; arranging student volunteer assistance; and commissioning an appropriately Egyptological ice sculpture.

To all who helped to make the Providence meeting one of the most successful in our fifty-two-year history, Annual Meeting Chair Emily Teeter, the board of governors, and ARCE's individual and institutional members are deeply grateful.

Next year's meeting, hosted by The Johns Hopkins University's Department of Near Eastern Studies, is scheduled for the weekend of April 26–28 in Baltimore, Maryland. ■

Participants at the fifty-second annual meeting of the American Research Center in Egypt, Brown University. In foreground, left to right: Nicholas Picardo, Jarek Dobrowolski, and Deborah Schorsch. Photo: Carolyn Tomaselli-ARCE



## Cairo Center

The balcony of ARCE's offices from the grand salon. In the middle distance: the former U.S. embassy, now a school; in the background: the Mugama al-Tahrir, which houses the public departments of several government ministries and the Cairo governorate. Photo: Ola Seif

### Programs

Over the course of the academic year (September to June), the Cairo Center sponsored thirty-two visiting lecturers as part of our Wednesday-evening seminar series. The lectures have been consistently filled to capacity and attract a wide range of visitors—students and academics of all nationalities, members of foreign diplomatic missions, the press, members of the Egyptian government working in the fields of archaeology and conservation, architects and building engineers, as well as individuals who simply have an abiding interest in Egypt and its history. Space limitations prevent us from listing and acknowledging our lecturers individually, but we're grateful to all of them and hope that they'll return in years to come to update us on the progress of their research.

Jocelyn Gohary presented a series of four slide lectures on pharaonic Egypt, giving students a rich overview of its early history, monuments, daily life, and art and culture. We also spon-

sored a special film showing of Caroline Williams's *Cairo: 1001 Years of Islamic Art and Architecture*.

In 2001 ARCE initiated what we hope will be a continuing series of symposia given in Arabic by visiting Egyptian lecturers. Held in the intimate setting of the renovated Kershaw Conference Room, this year's three symposia, arranged by ARCE's Islamicist-in-Residence Suzanne Pinckney Stetkevych, provided an opportunity for students to read and discuss Egyptian poetry in its original language with professors from universities in Cairo and the Gulf. ARCE also sponsored a very successful series of educational field trips over the course of the year; expert guides led tours to Siwa Oasis (Angela Jones), North Sinai (Bahay Issawi and Mohamed Abdel Maksoud), the Coptic monasteries of Wadi Nutrum, al-Suriyan, and al-Baramus (Elizabeth Bolman), Berenike (Bahay Issawi, Steven Sidebotham, and Willemina Wendrich), Abydos (Janet Richards



and Matthew Adams); the Giza Plateau (Mark Lehner); and Bab Zuwayla (Nairy Hampikian).

Mary Sadek energetically planned and coordinated these events; programs for next year promise a similarly diverse and engrossing range of speakers and topics. Upcoming events are posted regularly on our website, and we can provide email notification of upcoming seminars, symposia, study trips, and other events; send a message to [arce@internetegypt.com](mailto:arce@internetegypt.com) ("attention: Mary Sadek" in the subject line) and we'll put you on our electronic mailing list so that you can receive reminders of upcoming events. Our events are open to all, but we particularly encourage ARCE members, whether based here in Cairo or passing through, to stop in and visit our Center and take part in the programs we offer.

### Fellowships

Fellowship appointments and approvals came in just in time to make this issue of the *Bulletin*, and we're pleased to announce the names, affiliations, and research topics of our 2001–2002 fellows and affiliates (see pp. 10–11). We also take the opportunity, with sadness at their departure but hopeful that they will return, to say farewell to our 2000–2001 fellows: Kelly M. Askew, Jere Lehman Bach-

arach, Jenny Linn Cashman, Kathlyn Cooney, Nicole Bernadette Hansen, Wilson Chacko Jacob, Amy Jo Johnson, Nozomu Kawai, Vickie Langohr, Karen Rose Mathews, Judith Janet Shirley, Elizabeth Ann Smith, Suzanne Pinckney Stetkevych, and Deborah Ann Vischak. Each of the fellows generously shared their findings with audiences at ARCE's seminars; these presentations gave attendees unusual insight into the developing research interests of a cohort of bright scholars, and we hope that the opportunity to make presentations before an engaged audience helped shape and hone their research.

### Facilities upgrade

The last two months have been particularly busy ones at the Cairo Center as we upgrade our facilities to make them more accommodating and comfortable for ARCE visitors, members, and fellows.

We're in the process of converting the unused and previously derelict roof of the bank below into a paved terrace that looks over the U.S. embassy's beautiful gardens—a rare spot of green in central Cairo; furnished with chairs, tables, and umbrellas, surrounded by a new railing that incorporates the lotus emblem of our building (which also appears on our letterhead), and decorated with plants and flowers, the terrace promises to be a relaxing place for ARCE visitors to sit and chat or simply unwind from Cairo's hustle and bustle. The grand opening takes place this fall, and we hope that ARCE members and visitors will be on hand to attend the gala event.

A glass door has been cut onto the terrace from the Kershaw Conference Room, and workers have stripped the room's floor of its old carpeting and replaced it with marble. The room is already in frequent use for meetings such as the one with the USAID mission director in June, and we recently hosted three well-attended small sym-

posia on Egyptian poetry that made good use of the intimate and comfortable space. We're confident that it will be used often and productively over the years to come.

We've constructed approximately two hundred and fifty feet of glassed-in shelving in the grand salon to relieve the overflow from the William Kelly and Marilyn M. Simpson Library; it doesn't solve the space shortage, but it buys a little time and enables us to protect valuable books and display them securely.

Our phone system has been strained in the past by the limits on the number of lines allocated to ARCE. A voicemail system installed in May allows callers to leave messages during the day and after hours.

We've started in on refurbishing the ARCE residence at 2 Midan Simón Bolívar, repainting the rooms, refinishing the parquet floors, installing new air-conditioners, and replacing the curtains and worn furniture; the completion of the work in early August will ensure a comfortable and hospitable place to stay for visiting fellows and ARCE members.

One block from the Nile Corniche, three blocks from the Egyptian Museum, and a short cab or subway ride from medieval and Coptic Cairo, ARCE's Cairo Center residence is hands-down the best value in town: single rooms (with shared bathrooms) go for \$U.S. 25 a night; doubles: \$40, complemented by laundry facilities, a kitchen, and a dining area. We invite all members passing through Cairo to consider making ARCE their short-term residence. (That said, space is limited, and advance reservations necessary: please contact our offices at [arce@internetegypt.com](mailto:arce@internetegypt.com).)

The work of these last several months has involved many of ARCE's employees; we're grateful especially to Ray Salamanca, chief financial officer, Amir Abdel Hamid, office manager,

Yasser Hamdy, systems manager, and our security staffer Yehia Yassin, all of whom have spent long nights and weekends supervising the work.

### Staff

The spring has seen also several new hires. We're glad to welcome Carol Wichman, who started in May as ARCE's development and cataloging librarian. Charles Dibble, our deputy director for publications and communications, started in March, coming to us via Dumbarton Oaks, the National Gallery of Art, and the Brookings Institution; he will divide his time between work for the Egyptian Antiquities Project (EAP) and ARCE. Barbara Bruening has returned to Cairo as assistant to the EAP grant administrator, working with the Antiquities Development Project. We're happy to report that Neveen Serry Zaghoul, the EAP's administrative secretary, has been appointed ARCE's assistant program coordinator, assisting Mme. Amira with governmental relations for expeditions and fellowships. With Neveen's move to the other side of the grand salon, we also have a new arrival and welcome EAP's new administrative secretary Marwa Mustafa. Two new messengers, Mohammad Hassan Mohammad and Abd Rabo 'Ali, joined our staff in June.

ARCE's doors are open to all who share an interest in Egypt; that said, we'd like to more people to join the organization as members so that they can take advantage of the substantial benefits of membership, including subscriptions to the *Bulletin* and the *Journal*, bargain airfares on EgyptAir between the United States and Cairo, discounted hotel rooms, access to the Residence, and invitations to special ARCE-sponsored events. We particularly encourage members to visit our offices and meet our staff when they are in Cairo. ■

## Chapters

Public programs sponsored by ARCE's five U.S. local chapters include guest lectures, lecture courses, exhibition tours, symposia, conferences, and workshops. Programs are diverse and are devoted to the entire range of Egypt's history. For up-to-date information regarding programs, please consult the chapters' websites.

Arizona (Tucson)  
Suzanne Onstine, president  
[www.arizona.edu/~egypt/arce\\_az.htm](http://www.arizona.edu/~egypt/arce_az.htm)

Northern California (Berkeley)  
Nancy Corbin, president  
<http://home.pacbell.net/djoser/index.htm>

North Texas (Dallas)  
Rick Moran, president  
[www.arce-ntexas.org](http://www.arce-ntexas.org)

Southern California (Los Angeles)  
Noel Sweitzer, president  
[www.arcesc.org](http://www.arcesc.org)

Washington D.C.  
Francis Niedenuhr, president  
[www.arcedc.org](http://www.arcedc.org)



## ARCE's U.S. Office

In December 1999 ARCE moved its U.S. office from a commercial space in New York City to an academic setting in Atlanta in order to further the goal of obtaining closer linkage with a research university. The organization is now affiliated with Emory University, a Research Supporting Member of ARCE, and the U.S. staff works in an on-campus office suite.

The U.S. office coordinates all aspects of the fellowship and visiting scholar programs in the United States and provides services to consortium and individual members, including the coordination of security permits for archaeological expeditions and the hosting of sponsored visitors under special programs. The Atlanta office also serves as liaison with ARCE's five U.S. chapters.

U.S. staff carry out program-related activities in consultation with the director of ARCE, Robert Springborg, who is based in Cairo, and under the financial supervision of the chief financial officer, Ray Salamanca, who is based in Cairo and maintains an office in Atlanta. Mr. Salamanca has worked in accounting and finance for twenty-seven years, of which twenty-three with nonprofit organizations. The staff consists of a coordinator for U.S. operations, an

administrative assistant, and a part-time secretary.

The coordinator of United States operations, Susanne Thomas, holds a doctorate in modern languages and has nine years' combined experience in managing fellowship programs and international education programs. She is responsible for the day-to-day management of fellowships, planning and execution of other grant-related programs, and public programming in the United States. She also prepares grant applications, and quarterly, interim, and final grant reports under the supervision of the chief financial officer.

Carolyn Tomaselli, administrative assistant, handles general business, membership, chapter liaison, and serves as the ARCE liaison to the Egyptian Antiquities Project. Carolyn also is in charge of events planning, including logistics for the annual meeting. She continues to manage the website until its transfer to Cairo can take place.

As this issue of the *Bulletin* goes to press, we are interviewing for a part-time secretary to handle general inquiries, email, and mail distribution, provide clerical support for the director and the chief financial officer in Cairo, and maintain fellowship-related information on various websites. ■

## 2001–2002 Fellows and Affiliates

### U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs Fellows

Jason McCue Brownlee, Princeton University  
*Liberalization by Design: Institutional Legacies of President Sadat's Multiparty System*

Heather Nina Keaney, University of California at Santa Barbara  
*Collective Memory and Political Legitimacy: The Revolt against the Caliph 'Uthman b. Affan in Mamluk Historiography*

Deanna Jane Kiser, University of California at Berkeley  
*A Stylistic and Iconographic Study*

*of Selected Post-Amarna Period Private Tombs in Thebes*

Shaun Timothy Lopez, University of Michigan  
*Cultural Transformation in Modern Egypt, 1923–1952*

Mona Lisa Russell, Massachusetts Institute of Technology  
*Commodifying Identity: Egyptian Advertising from 1922 to 1952*

Jocelyn Cordelia Sharlet, Princeton University  
*The Spirit in the Text: Religious Motifs in Pre-Modern Arabic Lyric, Narrative, and Rhetorical Literature*

Judith Janet Shirley, The Johns Hopkins University  
*The Ancient Egyptian Bureaucratic System during the Mid-Eighteenth Dynasty of the New Kingdom*

Kristen Ann Stilt, Harvard University  
*The Muhtasib and the Islamic Legal System in Bahri Mamluk Egypt*

**National Endowment for the Humanities Fellows**  
Peter Gran, Temple University  
*Egyptian Culture in the Age of Tahtawi*

## Library Notes

The small bag of bones among the boxes was one of the early intimations that this was something other than a run-of-the-mill research library.

Working with Hamman Fawzy Hassan, ARCE's readers' services librarian, and assisted by assistant librarian Soliman G. Abdallah and volunteer Kevin Havener, Carol Wichman, the Center's newly hired development and cataloguing librarian, has spent the last several weeks documenting the William Kelly and Marilyn M. Simpson Library's uncatalogued holdings, many of them donations from the Center's generous members, fellows, and friends. The work has made accessible some unique documents and monographs, among them the personal papers of Ghamal Mohktar, which shed light on Egyptological projects excavations during the 1960s and '70s, including the relocation of the temples at Abu Simbel.

With the sorting nearing completion, Mrs. Wichman will next tackle converting the library's card catalogue to Library of Congress conventions and working with the Council of Overseas American Research Centers (COARC) to integrate the library's holdings into an online union catalogue that lists the holdings of all COARC member institutions together in one database. Drafting guidelines for book and journal acquisitions and donations and establishing environmental controls to protect the holdings constitute additional key priorities for the library over the coming months.

Mrs. Wichman has worked professionally in schools and libraries for more than thirty years since receiving her Masters in Library Science from Emporia State Teacher's College in Emporia, Kansas. She is adjunct professor of library science at Wright State University in Dayton, Ohio, where she is spend-

ing part of the summer teaching graduate-level classes in library management.

In recent years the Simpson library's areas of collection development have included physical anthropology, architectural conservation, and medieval Islamic philosophy and science. In addition to generous funding from the State Department's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs and a fund for purchases of Egyptological titles established by Katherine Griffis-Greenberg, book donations have provided an important component of the library's growth: since its founding in 1978, the library has received books from the private library of the Egyptian Egyptologist Ahmed Fahkry, former director of the Institut Francais d'Archéologie Orientale du Caire Charles Kuentz, and the Martha Roy Collection of Coptic Musicology, as well as titles from benefactors and former fellows.

ARCE's library serves on average more than twenty-five scholars of all nationalities a day, offering them unrestricted access to the collection. Its holdings include essential scholarly reference books, complete runs of specialist archaeological and historical journals in English, German, French, and Arabic (Arabic language titles account for some 20 percent of the library's holdings), and some rarities, such as the complete set of the monumental *Description de l'Égypte*, one of only ten in Egypt. The recent construction of some 250 feet of glassed-in shelves in the ARCE grand salon has relieved some of the immediate shortage, but the library's shelf space remains, quite literally, very tight, as recent visitors will attest.

And the bones? They were identified as rodent remains and turned out to belong to a professor at the University of Cairo. They have been returned to their rightful owner. ■

Stephen Phillip Harvey, University of Memphis  
*Royal Women in a Time of Transition: Monuments of Queens Tetisheri and Ahmose-Nefertari at Abydos*

Adam Abdelha Sabra, University of Michigan  
*An Agrarian History of Egypt from the Arabs to the Ottomans*

**Samuel H. Kress Fellowship in Egyptian Art and Architecture**  
Violaine Anne Chauvet, The Johns Hopkins University  
*The Conception of Private Tombs in the Later Old Kingdom*

**Fulbright-Hays Affiliate**  
Kambiz Ghanea-Bassiri, Harvard University  
*Justice and Its Determination in Early Islamic Thought*

**Council of American Overseas Research Centers Affiliate**  
David Hollenberg, University of Pennsylvania  
*Interpretation after the End of the Days: The Early Isma'ili Spokesman Jafar ibn Masur al-Yaman on Prophets and Politics*

**William P. McHugh Memorial Fund**  
Ethan C. Watrall, Indiana University  
*Hierakonpolis Expedition*



## The Small Temple of Amun at Medinet Habu

W. RAYMOND JOHNSON is project director of EAP's Small Temple of Amun Conservation Project and field director of the Oriental Institute's Epigraphic Survey.

### W. Raymond Johnson

In pharaonic times the Small Temple of Amun at Medinet Habu was believed to mark the holy mound within which the eight primæval gods of Egypt, including Amun, were buried. Its importance is attested by the numerous additions and renovations to the complex during its more than two-thousand-year history. The earliest part of the temple that still stands today was built by Hatshepsut and Thutmosis III in the mid-Eighteenth Dynasty (ca. 1460 BCE), but part of their complex rests on a section of platform that dates much earlier—possibly as early as the Eleventh Dynasty (ca. 2050). During the Twentieth Dynasty, Ramesses III (r. ca. 1184–1153) enclosed the complex within the walls of his great mortuary precinct, in the process lending his own works greater sanctity. Kushite kings from the Twenty-fifth Dynasty (ca. 712) added an elegant pylonated entryway to the core temple and breached Ramesses III's massive enclosure wall to give the Amun temple its own monumental entrance. The even larger pylon gateway was constructed in the later Ptolemaic period (ca. 100 BCE), and in the Roman period a great forecourt was begun by Antoninus Pius in 138 CE but left unfinished.



The Oriental Institute's Epigraphic Survey has been documenting the decoration of the temple since 1991, and the copying of the decoration for publication will be the

## The Egyptian Antiquities Project and the Antiquities Development Project

EAP projects are financed under USAID grant no. 263-G-00-93-00089-00 for the Restoration and Preservation of Egyptian Antiquities.

ADP projects are financed under USAID grant no. 263-G-00-96-00016-00 for the Promotion of Sustainable Tourism Cultural Activities.

In 1993 ARCE signed an agreement with the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) to administer a multimillion-dollar grant in Egyptian currency to conduct projects and programs that promote the restoration and preservation of Egyptian antiquities. The Egyptian Antiquities Project, or EAP, was established within ARCE to manage and direct conservation projects. The aim of all our projects is

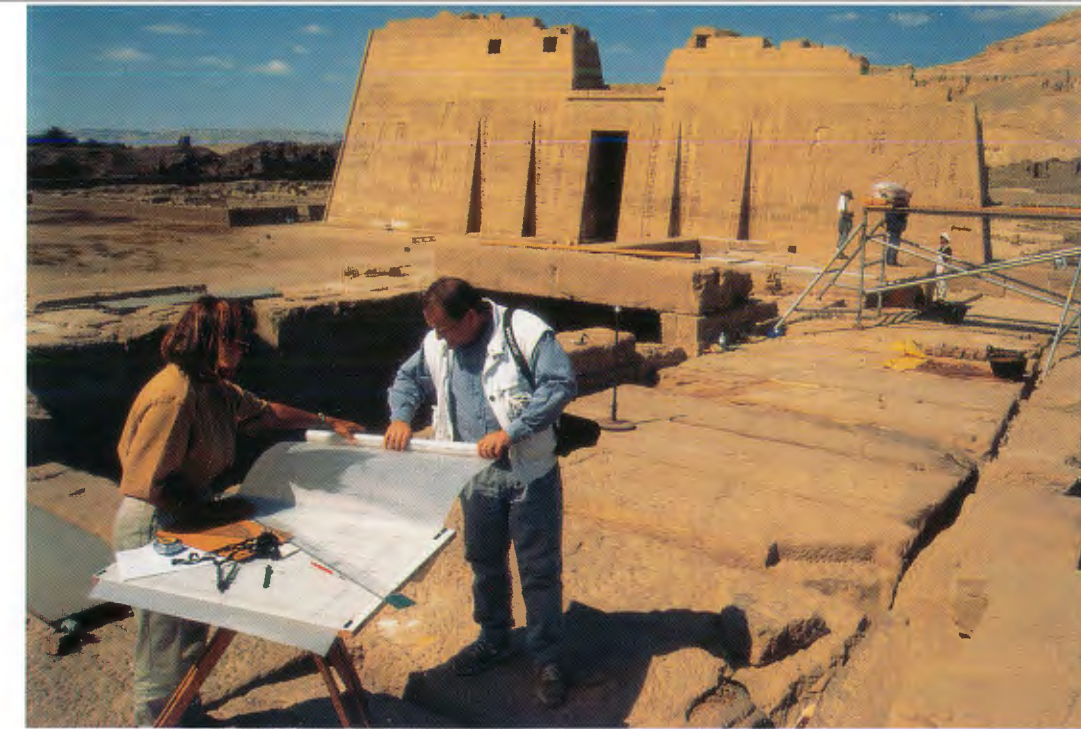
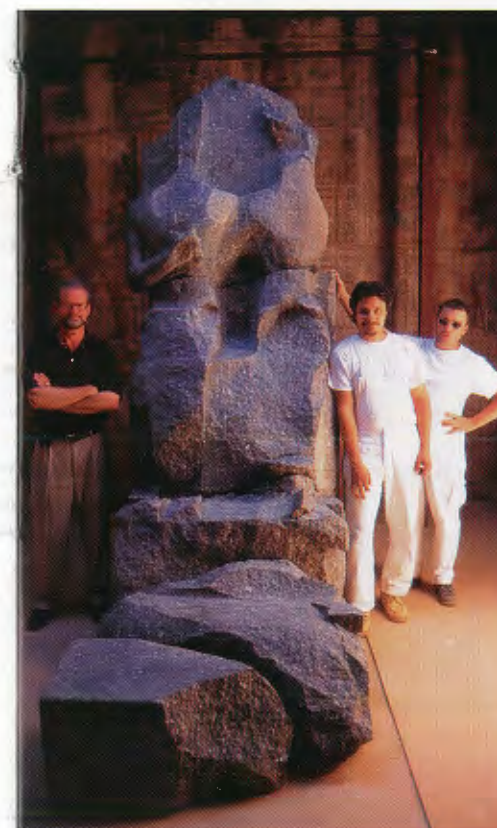
to preserve these antiquities for the benefit of present and future generations. The scope of the conservation work is extensive and covers all periods of Egyptian history, including prehistoric, pharaonic, Græco-Roman, Islamic, Coptic, and Judaic sites or monuments throughout the country.

The conservation projects are conducted under the auspices of, and in cooperation with, the Supreme Council of Antiquities.

In late 1995 ARCE signed an additional grant agreement with USAID to conduct conservation work at four sites under the Gore-Mubarak Partnership for Sustainable Growth and Development. These projects, which fall under the Antiquities Development Project (ADP), include a study at the tomb of Seti I in the Valley of the Kings, the Ottoman fort at Quseir, and two Coptic monasteries in the Eastern Desert.

primary focus of the Survey for the years to come. But a series of recent catastrophic rainstorms, rising groundwater, and the continuous depredations of time and the elements brought home the fact that conservation work was necessary even for the short-term preservation of the monument. Torrential rains in 1994 caused considerable damage to the temple inside and out, seeping through leaks in the roof, staining and muddying the carved wall surfaces, and in some case attracting latent, soluble salts trapped within the stone blocks, which then crystallized on the stone's surface, breaking it down. Rising groundwater, in large part the product of constant irrigation in nearby fields, contains these dissolved salts and minerals and percolates into the walls through the foundations. The groundwater eventually evaporates but leaves the salt behind, which accumulates. Buried walls absorb the salt-laden groundwater directly.

Committed to documenting the Small Temple of Amun, the Epigraphic



Survey sought to take on the responsibility of conservation. We submitted a proposal to ARCE's Egyptian Antiquities Project to support part of the documentation effort as well as limited but vital conservation of the monument. The conservation effort, which was launched during the 1996–97 season and is expected to culminate in 2002, has included further documentation, sealing the roof against rainfall, cleaning and conserving wall-reliefs soiled by rainwater and acidic bird droppings, laying of proper stone flooring, and installing lighting in the barque sanctuary area.

The conservation efforts at Medinet Habu have brought to light numerous important discoveries. In 1994, while trenching around the walls of the temple in the standard attempt to lessen the salt damage to the walls above by lowering the foundation line, the Supreme Council of Antiquities discovered that the foundation stones of a Ptolemaic hall built in front of the Eighteenth-Dynasty temple consist of reused, decorated blocks from the Kushite and early Ptolemaic periods. Reopening of the trenches along the sidewalls during the 1996–97 season revealed 170 decorated relief blocks, many of which retain their original paint, and all of which were recorded. Restoration

work on the temple's roof has included the documentation of recorded numerous graffiti dating back to the pharaonic and Coptic periods and the discovery of an Eighteenth-Dynasty limestone stela reused as a chinking stone. Clearing of debris in the Queen Hatshepsut chapels during the 1999–2000 season recovered huge fragments of a three-meter-high granodiorite dyad of Thutmosis III and Amun, which were partly reassembled in the central chamber during the 2000–2001 season.

Next season (2001–2002), we will finish the restoration of the statue group in its original architectural setting, extend the cleaning and stabilization of painted reliefs into the middle sanctuaries, and complete the roof restoration.

This and every season's conservation work at Medinet Habu could not have continued without the generous assistance and partnership of the Supreme Council of Antiquities, particularly Prof. Dr. Gaballa 'Ali Gaballa, Secretary General; General Mohammed Nader Mostafa, Director General of the Sectors Projects; Dr. Sabry Abdel-Azziz, General Director of Antiquities for Upper Egypt; and Dr. Mohamed el-Bially, General Director for the West Bank of Luxor. ■

*Above: 1998–99 season. Project staff working on the roof of the Small Temple at Medinet Habu, looking southwest toward the pylons of the Mortuary Temple of Ramesses III. Photo: Robert Vincent—ARCE*

*Below left: 2000–2001 season. Left to right: Dr. Johnson and conservators Lofth Hassan and Dany Roy with the reassembled base and torso of the statue of Thutmosis III and Amun in the central chamber. Photo: Jarek Dobrowolski—ARCE*

*Opposite page: Eighteenth-Dynasty relief on a pillar face in the barque sanctuary ambulatory of the Small Temple of Amun: Horus the Elder embraces Thutmosis III, having given the king "millions of years." Photo: Jarek Dobrowolski—ARCE*



# The Sabil-Madrasa Muhammad 'Ali Pasha

AGNIESZKA DOBROWOLSKA is project director of the Sabil-Madrasa Muhammad 'Ali (Tusun Pasha) Conservation Project.

Right: Installation of the re-gilded bronze window-grilles; left to right: conservation apprentices Nabil Nur el-Din Qutb and Mahmoud Badawi and metal conservator Reinhold Berger. Photo: Agnieszka Dobrowolska-ARCE

Below: Elevation of the façade of the sabil-madrasa Muhammad 'Ali Pasha from Harat al-Rum. Line drawing: Marek Puzskarski-ARCE

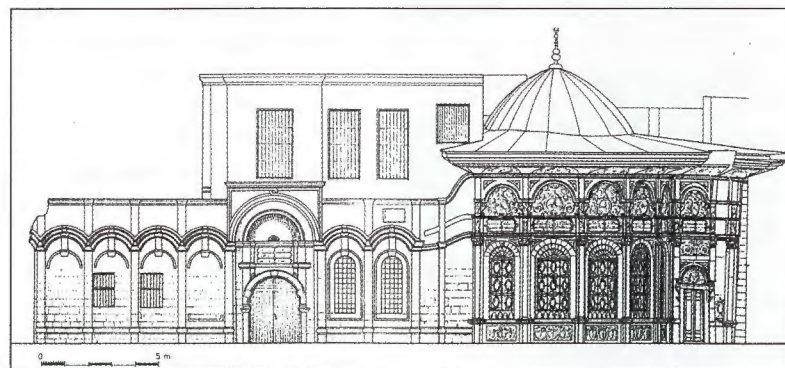


In 1819 Muhammad 'Ali Pasha (1769–1849), with the support of his wife Emine (called by her contemporaries the Queen of the Nile) erected a monument to commemorate their second son, Prince Ahmed Tusun, who led campaigns against the Wahhabis in Arabia before dying suddenly of the plague in 1816 at the age of 23. The complex is located on medieval Cairo's main street—Sharia Muizz Liddin Allah—leading into the walled Fatimid city from its southern gate, Bab Zuwayla.

The sabil-madrasa of Muhammad 'Ali Pasha is under a comprehensive architectural conservation program that began in September 1998 and is expected to finish in late spring 2002.

The complex comprises a lavishly decorated public fountain (*sabil*) and a school building (*madrasa*), erected as a charitable foundation to dispense water from large ground-floor windows to passersby and to provide instruction for local children. Architecturally, the sabil-madrasa Muhammad 'Ali Pasha represents an entirely new form of this uniquely Cairene combination of build-

ings. The rich carving of the white marble facade, the ingenious structure and lavishly painted decoration of the wooden dome; the carved and brightly painted wooden eaves; and the gilded bronze window grilles are far removed from the centuries-old tradition of fountain-schools, represented less than two hundred meters away by the sabil-kuttab of Nafisa al-Bayda (1796), another monument conserved by the Egyptian Antiquities Project. The lavish, ornate style of the Muhammad 'Ali complex is that of imperial Istanbul, and the structure serves as both a monument to the pasha's beloved son and a statement of



## Agnieszka Dobrowolska

political authority by the founder of a dynasty that lasted until 1953.

By 1998 the sabil and the madrasa had long fallen out of use and were visibly suffering from decades of neglect. The complex was on the verge of collapse; wide cracks in the walls attested to its structural instability. The precious architectural decoration was in danger of being lost; the wooden dome surmounting the sabil had been stripped of its original lead covering in the 1930s, and rainwater threatened the exquisite painted decoration on the dome's interior. The marble facade was covered with a thick layer of grime and dirt; carved limestone decoration was falling into powder and being eaten away by rising groundwater.

The most imminent threat to the building was the uneven settlement of its foundations (the roof of a neighboring mosque collapsed under similar circumstances in June 1999). To address the problem, the project team underpinned the foundation by manually driving in thin pilings—mechanical piling would have caused excessive vibration—down to stable soil, seven to nine meters below grade, an effort that took more than a year to complete. Thanks to the rein-

forcement of the foundation, the structure survived unscathed the recent (12 June) test of a 4.9 Richter-scale earthquake, centered at Dashur, forty-five kilometers from central Cairo.

Major structural cracks have been treated, and all walls have been repointed, stitched, and grouted. The ceilings have been reinforced and the dome re-covered with lead sheeting; the re-roofing of the madrasa over the summer to protect it from rain has been made all the more challenging by the season's oppressive heat.

Work continues on the decorative wooden eaves, which had been scorched by fire prior to the intervention. In some areas, the wood's exposure to direct sunlight had resulted in severe desiccation, giving rise to multiple open cracks and fissures. Once the wood surfaces had been cleaned and fissures infilled, they were impregnated with a solution of linseed oil and turpentine. The pigments remaining were analyzed and a reversible trial retouching completed in the most damaged part of the eaves to protect them against the effects of direct sunlight.

Cleaning, consolidation, and conservation of all the decorative elements—



marble, limestone, wood, and metal—are well advanced. Workmen have been using surgical scalpels, miniature trowels, and toothbrushes, as well as nonaggressive chemical methods, to clean the large expanses of stonework. The bronze window-grilles have been re-gilded with 23.75 carat gold leaf to restore the original protective layer over the bronze. Conservation over this season has revealed new details of rococo architectural landscapes painted inside the dome.

Last January, we made a spectacular discovery directly under the sabil: a six-bay, nine-meter-high cistern, plastered with watertight mortar and in surprisingly good structural condition. Astonishingly,

the water of the cistern, sealed over almost a century ago, was blue and crystal clear, recalling the Turkish inscription on the sabil's dedicatory plaque:

*It is the divine gift of blessed water  
That makes all the things in the world  
move.  
Behold a wonder: Many of the gentlemen  
of Egypt,  
Each one in his different way, are mentioned in history.  
But Muhammad 'Ali Pasha alone built  
this glorious sabil  
That delivers blessed water.*

Inscription translated from the Turkish  
by Stanislaw Gulinski ■

Above left: Painted interior of the sabil's dome. Photo: Patrick Godeau-ARCE

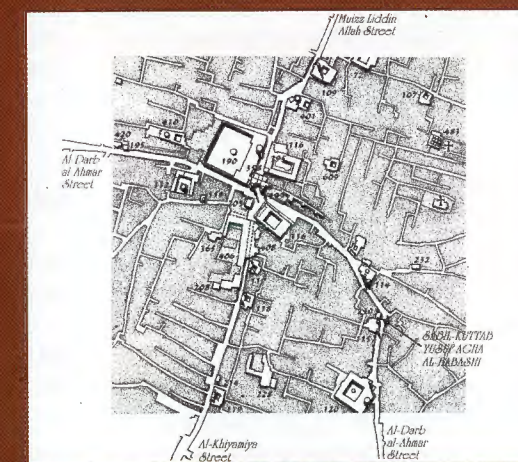
Center: Re-covering the outer dome with lead sheeting; on ladder: roof specialist Jan Lindemann. Photo: Agnieszka Dobrowolska-ARCE

Right: The sabil's bayed cistern; in background: senior worker Farag Hussein Ibrahim. Photo: Patrick Godeau-ARCE

The Egyptian Antiquities Project has focused much of its conservation work on the Bab Zuwayla area of medieval Cairo. Basing its efforts on the concept of area conservation, where select improvements to adjacent buildings reinforce one another, attract visitors, further investment, and ideally lead to the general upgrading of an entire area, EAP is concentrating on a number of structures of different

periods within the same urban unit. These are the

Bab Zuwayla city-gate itself, the mosque of al-



Salih Tal'i', the zawiya-sabil Farag ibn Barquq, the sabil-kuttab Nafisa al-Bayda, the sabil-madrasa Muhammad 'Ali Pasha, and buildings down Sharia Bab al-Wazir toward the Citadel: the urban palace Bayt al Razzaz, and four nineteenth-century houses. The area is a vibrant, busy locale where visitors can experience the texture of medieval life firsthand.

Registered monuments are designated by number.  
116: Mosque of al-Salih Tala'i (1160)  
199: Bab Zuwayla (1092)  
203: Zawiya-sabil Farag ibn Barquq (1408)  
358: Sabil-kuttab Nafisa al-Bayda (1796)  
401: Sabil-madrasa Muhammad 'Ali Pasha (1820)  
Line drawing: Agnieszka Dobrowolska



# The Combined Prehistoric Expedition Results of the 2001 Season

Romuald Schild and Fred Wendorf

ROMUALD SCHILD is director of the Institute of Archaeology and Ethnology of the Polish Academy of Sciences, Warsaw. FRED WENDORF is the Henderson-Morrison Professor of Anthropology at Southern Methodist University, Dallas, Texas.

PROJECT PERSONNEL  
Director: Romuald Schild  
Honorary director: Fred Wendorf  
Archaeologists: Jacek Kabacinski, Michael Kobusiewicz, and Halina Królik  
Archaeobotanist: Joel D. Irish  
Scientific consultant: Bahay Issawi  
SCA inspector: Adel Kelany

During the 2001 season, the Combined Prehistoric Expedition continued its research in the Southwestern Desert of Egypt. It was our first season at the Gebel Ramlah basin, a wind-eroded concavity at the foot of Gebel Ramlah, an important mountain located twenty-five kilometers northwest of Gebel Nabta and some hundred and twenty kilometers west of Abu Simbel. Two sites were tested. The first, E-01-1, excavated by Halina Królik, is a complex multi-component settlement containing cultural deposits of late Early and Late Neolithic affinities.<sup>1</sup> The second, E-01-2, excavated by Michael Kobusiewicz and Jacek Kabacinski, includes a settlement and a burial area of Late Neolithic age.

A playa in the internally drained basin at the foot of Gebel Ramlah extends for some four kilometers along the mountain's east-west axis and about one kilometer on the north-south axis. The floor of the basin is at approximately 120 meters above mean sea level. The excavated archaeological sites are spread at its southwestern margin. The catchment area of the basin covers about one hundred square kilometers. Several shallow wadis enter the playa from the south, draining the Cretaceous badland, and descending from the preserved Middle Paleolithic surface at an elevation of 236 meters, located some sixteen kilometers to the south. In the center of the basin, Early Neolithic yellowish brown lake silts are exposed, while its eastern, southern, and western shores are covered by shallow washes forming a pebbly surface sheet. Most of the Late/Final Neolithic sites occur in a wide zone of shallow

washes and low, wide, inconspicuous wadi channels to the southwest of the playa basin.

Site E-01-1 lies on a low knoll made up of fine Qusseir sands, through which extensive patches of bedrock lie exposed. On the northern and eastern sides, thin Early Neolithic playa silts topped by muddy washes cover the knoll. The archaeology is embedded in the powdered, weathered surface of the Cretaceous sands, as well as in the top part of the preserved silty sands of a sheet wash. The Late/Final Neolithic artifacts are seen throughout the topmost sheet-wash deposits; the late Early Neolithic ones are embedded in the playa silts on the northern side of the knoll.

The nearby site E-01-2 comprises two major cultural deposits. The lower one, in alluvial gravelly sands, contains slightly redeposited Middle Neolithic archaeology. The upper one occurs throughout fine sands deposited by slowly moving streams and muddy sands formed in shallow seasonal pools. It is of Late to Final (?) Neolithic resemblance.

## Archaeology at Site E-01-1

At Jerar, late Early Neolithic pottery, as well as Late to Final (?) Neolithic archaeology occur on the surface of the entire hillock remnant. Three poorly preserved skeletons were found exposed on the surface in the eastern part of the site, placed in three intersecting burial pits. The graves, on the other hand, were inset in an earlier round house. Of the three skeletons only two could be partially measured. Both were flexed, placed on their right

sides, heads to the west, facing south, and hands drawn to their faces. Both of the measured skeletons were females, one of them an elderly adult, the other a young adult. According to Joel D. Irish, both had many resemblances with sub-Saharan populations.

The excavated area in the center of the knoll exposed a large stone-walled hearth dug into the cemented Qusseir bedrock. It contained several elongated air channels carved into the rock base. At least three somewhat younger hearths were inset into the fill of the stonewalled hearth. The hearths contain pottery and rare lithic artifacts of Late to Final (?) Neolithic resemblance. Of interest is the well-preserved lower jaw of a large cow embedded in the latest hearth.

## Archaeology at Site E-01-2

A dense concentration of lithic artifacts, bones, pottery sherds and ostrich eggshells, as well as several hearths define the limits of the habitation area. Small pottery and artifact collection from the area indicate a Late Neolithic age of the settlement.

About sixty meters west of the habitation area was a cluster of burials, several of which were exposed on the surface. A cut measuring six meters by six meters uncovered the entire burial area. Nine clusters of skeletons were exposed; two of the burials were single individuals, six contained more than one individual, and one was a possible burial with many grave goods but no human remains. All of the skeletons were very poorly preserved.

All of the better-preserved burials shared a common position of the skeletons. The bodies were placed on the right side, head to the west, and facing south. All had their hands situated palms together in front of the face, and the legs were flexed, in some cases quite tightly. The dead had originally been placed in coiled baskets that fit the body. In a few instances, decomposed traces of the baskets were observed during excavations.

The grave pits were all oval in outline, measuring from 1.0 to 1.3 meters in length, and 0.8 to 1.0 meters in width. The original depth, because of wind erosion, could not be determined, while the present depth of the pits ranged from twenty to forty centimeters below the surface. The morphology of the area suggests that perhaps more than fifty centimeters of the sand had been removed.

In six instances multiple bodies were buried in the same pit. Some of these were probably secondary burials. Several pits contained skeletons, or parts of skeletons, placed during consecutive internment intervals, in one instance as much as four internments. As observed by Dr. Irish, when a later internment disturbed an earlier one, an effort was made to restore the anatomical order of the disturbed part of the skeleton. This might include replacing fallen teeth with others (set in the wrong position) or fixing bracelets around the humerus, the flesh of which had already decomposed, by wedging sections of small bones to hold the bracelets in place.

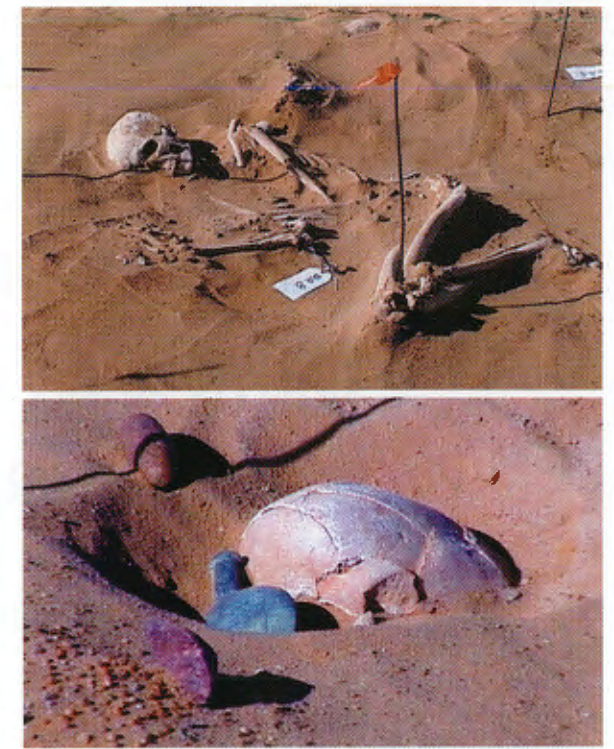
The burial area contained thirty individuals. Eighteen of these were identified as females; six were males. The sex of the remaining six individuals (four of them children) could not be determined. The skeletons represent all age groups, from newborns to individuals between 40 and 50 years old. The physical condition of the skeletons indicated good health. No traces of trauma

were detected. Attrition of the teeth suggested that the diet contained particles of sand, probably from ground grain.

According to Dr. Irish, the dead from the burial ground of Site E-01-2 represent two physical populations and their mixtures, each defined by skeletal morphology and genetically controlled landmarks on the teeth. One of these populations Dr. Irish identified as sub-Saharan (occurring today throughout Africa from the Sahelian belt south), the other as North African—inhabiting lands along the coastal strip of North Africa south to Nubia. Both populations at Gebel Ramlah cemetery were represented in almost equal frequencies.

The burials contained rich grave goods. Among these are tulip-shaped beakers with elaborate incised and stamped decoration; hemispherical pottery vessels with round bases and ripple or roulette-stamped design; a pointed bottom jar with ripple exterior; and sherds from black-top wares. Of particular interest is a bowl or cup of gneiss (the so-called Chephren diorite) with a phallic handle. Personal adornments include numerous bracelets made of shell or ivory; beads and pendants of cornelian, agate, shell, and ceramic; and lip plugs of cornelian and turquoise. Several graves contained stone palettes and pestles, polished agate pebbles, thick sheets of mica, and bone or stone tools. Among the latter, microlithic crescents are of particular interest. Morphology and technology of the artifacts accompanying the dead suggest close affinities with classic early Predynastic grave-good assemblages from Upper Egypt.

The excavations at the foot of Gebel Ramlah have opened a new chapter in the late prehistory of Egypt. The area is not only rich in Late to Final Neolithic settlements, but also contains several



Top: Site E-01-02, Burial 8. Photo: Romuald Schild

Above: Site E-01-02, Burial 4: skull of a middle-aged female, with a gneiss bowl or cup. Photo: Romuald Schild

burial areas as well as individual internments. The excavated cemetery at Site E-01-2 is the first Neolithic graveyard found in the Southwestern Desert of Egypt. The rich grave goods of the cemetery indicate far-reaching trade contacts with sub-Saharan Africa, the Eastern Desert, the Red Sea, and the Sinai.

Although other individual burials of this period from the Southwestern Desert are known, they rarely contain grave goods. One may, therefore, suggest that the graveyard of Gebel Ramlah yields new data on socially stratified societies present in the Southwestern Desert during the Late and Final Neolithic period. Most probably of the same time range are the complex megalithic structures, the megalithic alignment, calendar circle, and tumuli containing a cow burial and other offerings in the nearby Nabta Playa basin.<sup>2</sup>

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## Notes

1. R. Schild and F. Wendorf, "Geoarchaeology of the Holocene Climatic Optimum at Nabta Playa, Southwestern Desert, Egypt," *Geoarchaeology* 16.1 (2001), 7–28.
2. F. Wendorf and R. Schild, "Nabta Playa during the Early and Middle Holocene," *ANKH: Revue d'égyptologie et des civilisations africaines* 4/5



# Traced by Incense: A Thirteenth-Century Epistyle in the Church of the Holy Virgin, Harat Zuwayla, Cairo

## With a Note on Its Conservation History

Zuzana Skalova

ZUZANA SKALOVA is a freelance art historian and conservator specializing in icons, based in Cairo since 1988; her publications focus on interdisciplinary approaches to the study of Coptic icons and their conservation. Mme. Skalova (zuzanaskalova@hotmail.com), who is preparing her doctorate at the University of Leiden, was director of the Egyptian-Dutch Conservation of Coptic Icons Project from 1989 to 1996. Her study of the technical history of icon painting in the Nile valley is in press.

The epistyle in 1993 before treatment. Photo: Zuzana Skalova



On a May Sunday in 1992, I was sitting on a bench directly facing the nave of the Coptic Orthodox Church of the Holy Virgin in Harat Zuwayla, situated at medieval Cairo's northeastern end, down a little lane off Sharia Bur Sa'id. It was morning, and the church was still unlit but already open for the service—a special one, officiated by a celebrated young bishop. The devastating earthquake that rocked Cairo and imperiled so many of its monuments was still five months away, and the church's interior was free of the scaffolding that now obscures the sightlines while the conservation of the church's fabric proceeds. The sound of running water gurgling along the south aisle called to mind the *genius loci*: the edifice, whose foundations date to early Christian times, was sited above a spring in what was then the middle of the desert, where the Holy Family, escaping the wrath of Herod, stopped to drink. Enmeshed in the

urban fabric since the Fatimid era, it is one of a chain of Marian churches (Coptic churches are not dedicated to Christ, "as all belong to him") built on miraculous springs and wells that trace and commemorate the Messiah's presence in Egypt.

Soon the church filled with worshippers, layfolk below and nuns from the adjoining convent in the screened first-floor galleries. The oil lamps were lit, candles placed in front of the icons, and, exceptionally, the electric chandeliers were switched on. As the honeyed voice of the bishop intoned the ancient liturgy and the choir chanted the repetitive responses in Coptic and Arabic, my eyes dwelled on the mesmerizing patterns of the splendid ivory-inlaid wooden screens in front of me. Suddenly, I saw a momentary apparition: on the screen of the south chapel dedicated to the Archangel Gabriel, glowed a gilded epistyle with seven biblical scenes. Obscured by centuries of dust and soot,

the icon, whose style suggested a Byzantine influence, had survived in what was probably its original medieval woodwork setting, not forgotten perhaps, but poised, before the era of electricity, beyond the reach of candlelight and visibility in the darkness of a subterranean, windowless church.

Rebuilt in the twelfth century following its destruction by Caliph al-Hakim, the ancient Church of the Holy Virgin at Harat Zuwayla was the See of the peripatetic Coptic patriarchate from the early fourteenth century until 1660. Most of the buildings of the present church close date to the eighteenth century, although they preserve some features from the church's remote past.

There is ample evidence for Coptic icons painted in the Byzantine style in Cairo and the Nile valley during the Middle Ages. Byzantine art itself, produced over the course of eleven hundred years, was inextricably linked to the



fortunes of the empire's capital, Constantinople. The early Byzantine style (ca. fourth–ninth century) shows a gradual transformation of classical style in service of new belief and Christian rulers, its development both disturbed and stimulated by periods of iconoclasm. The Middle Byzantine period (ca. ninth century–1260), ruled by the so-called Macedonian dynasty and the Komnenian emperors, produced courtly, sophisticated art that radiated far beyond the empire's borders. The late phase (sometimes termed Palaiologan after its ruling dynasty) lasted from 1261 until the fall of Constantinople in 1453. Although the Late Empire was marked by political and territorial decline, its art achieved a refined spirituality that had a profound impact on the development of later secular and religious art, in particular that of the Italian Renaissance.<sup>1</sup>

The richest collection of Byzantine icons is preserved in Egypt: in the remote Greek Orthodox monastery of St. Catherine at Mount Sinai. Built in the sixth century by the Byzantine emperor Justinian, the monastery houses an immensely rich store of icons from all phases of the Byzantine empire, some imperial gifts, others painted *in situ* by itinerant masters—Greeks, Georgians, Armenians, Syrians, and Latins. For centuries St. Catherine's has been a *locus sanctum* on the pilgrimage route between Cairo and the Holy Land. The collection reveals, moreover, the influence of the

Byzantine style on the production of icons in the empire's former colonies in the Levant, which had come under Islamic control in the seventh century.

In Islamic Cairo, the two branches of eastern Christianity—Melchite and Coptic, divided since the mid-fifth century by their differing interpretation of the human and divine natures of Christ—coexisted, disagreeing on points of doctrine but sharing a desire to assert that Christ was not merely a prophet (as Islam maintained) but the Son of God, made incarnate through Mary, the human Mother of God.

A Coptic-Arabic manuscript now in Munich, dating from the late twelfth to early thirteenth century, is particularly interesting for its account of a still-numerous and prospering Coptic community, busily refurbishing its repeatedly damaged churches with screens and panel paintings (among other church fixtures). The folios concerning Cairo's churches are attributed to Abu al-Makarim, the Church of the Holy Virgin's *qummu*s (chief priest or abbot), who describes a similar (lost) gilded epistyle depicting "the seven principal feasts and the image of Abu al-Sirri [perhaps a sponsor]." The tablet, "interwoven with gold" was erected upon the screen of the altar (of "teak wood inlaid with ivory and ebony, made by Ishac al-Naggar [the carpenter]" in what was at the time the episcopal Church of the Holy Virgin in nearby Harat al-Rum (the rebuilt church still exists, but the beam-

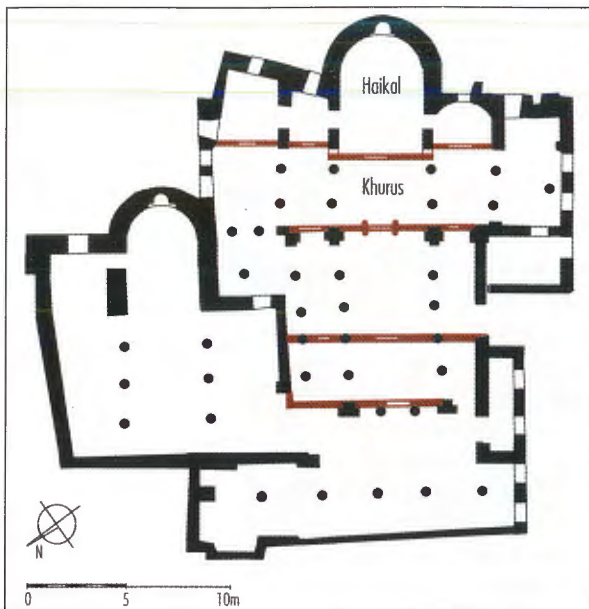
icon has not survived). The chronicler calls the icon's painter by the arabicized name Al Shaikh Abu al-Khair [*lit.*: the benevolent]. This Abu al-Khair was most likely a Byzantine-trained lay Copt—not surprising given the abundance of Melchite churches in Egypt's cities during the Middle Ages. (Christian churches of various denominations—Coptic, Melchite, Georgian, Armenian, and Frankish—were often located in close proximity to one another within small districts.) It is likely that the Harat Zuwayla screens and the epistyle are remnants of a costly refurbishment dating from Abu al-Makarim's time.

Contemporaneous Coptic sources such as *The Lamp of Darkness*, a tractate by Ibn Kabar (whose dates coincide with the designation of the church at Harat Zuwayla as the patriarchate at the beginning of the 1300s), attest to Coptic celebration of the seven great Christian festivals: the Annunciation, the Nativity, the Baptism, the Entry into Jerusalem, the Resurrection (or Anastasis), the Ascension, and Pentecost.<sup>3</sup> It may be, as Gabriel Millet has argued, that these feasts reflect a tradition that predates the canonization of twelve feasts (the *dodekaorton*) of the Greek Orthodox Church.<sup>4</sup>

The widely published claim that no medieval icons survive in the Coptic patrimony is no longer supportable. I have identified fifty icons in the Nile Valley from the Byzantine period—a few imported, but most made locally. Some were made for Melchite patrons, others for Coptic patrons; one of the latter is the epistyle icon of the Church of the Holy Virgin in Harat Zuwayla.<sup>5</sup> The survival of so few old icons in Coptic collections is attributable less to the tribulations that beset the remaining Cairene churches and their parishioners than to the improving circumstances of the Christian communities under the Ottoman empire during the eighteenth

Detail of *Ascension* (after consolidation in 1997, before restoration). The apostle depicted in profile calls to mind the mid-twelfth-century transept mosaics in the Basilica of the Nativity in Bethlehem, which are rendered in a local style that reflects cultural exchanges between Byzantium and the Crusader states. Photo: Zuzana Skalova





Above: Plan of the Church of the Holy Virgin, Harat Zuwayla. Line drawing by Zuzana Skalova after Butler 1884 and Grossmann 1982. From the Middle Ages until the end of the nineteenth century, screens (shown in highlight) divided the the sanctuary (comprising the altar [*haikal*] and the choir [*khurus*]) from the naos, where the congregation was divided into men's and women's sections. Most of the screens in the naos were removed in the early twentieth century. To the right of the *haikal*, in the side chapel of the Archangel Gabriel, stands the epistyle depicting the Seven Major Feasts, which would have figured prominently in medieval liturgical rites.

Opposite: Detail of Pentecost, photographed in 1997, showing cleaned and uncleaned portions. Cleaning and microphotograph: Zuzana Skalova

icons as models, reusing in some cases the old sycamore panels. Nevertheless, their revivalist Great Deesis icons and arcaded epistyles, although replicating medieval prototypes, clash with their refined medieval settings.<sup>6</sup>

These eighteenth-century works, in the course of time, fell prey to the same vicissitudes that befell their medieval predecessors, but rather than replacing the blackened icons, the Coptic patriarchate, in the beginning of the twentieth century, modernized (indeed, westernized) its ancient urban churches, dismantling the medieval partitions in the sanctuary area and moving the old icons from there to the side-aisles. Then, over the course of the century, these displaced and now easily accessible icons were "revitalized" by well-meaning nonspecialists—some repeatedly. The conservation and restoration of the most valuable medieval examples was entrusted between 1989 and 1996 to my mission: the joint Egyptian-Dutch training program in the framework of the Conservation of Coptic Icons Project.

After the service, the mother superior invited the bishop and his guests for tea. I told them that the beam-icon I had glimpsed called to mind Abu al-Makarim's account of a lost epistyle in Harat al-Rum; cleaning and conservation along the scientific principles that the Project had implemented in its workshops at the Coptic Museum and in the Church of Abu 'l Sayfayn (St. Mercurios) in Old Cairo, which I was supervising at the time, would professionally preserve what appeared to be an exceedingly rare and remarkable medieval Coptic icon, still *in situ*. Although the bishop consented to the conservation that afternoon (the Supreme Council of Antiquities and the program sponsor graciously gave their permission as well), it was almost two years before the icon could be carefully removed from its

screen and laid on a table in a makeshift workshop in the nunnery.

The monumental icon, which measures a little over half a meter in height and three meters in length, is divided into seven arcades. In six spandrels between the arches, portrait medallions depict Old Testament prophets unfurling scrolls written in medieval Arabic. They are prophecyizing, in the liturgical context, the events recounted in the New Testament and depicted in the arcades and identified in Greek/Coptic:

Isaiah (cf. Isa. 7:14): the Annunciation and the Nativity  
David (cf. Ps. 113): the Baptism  
Zechariah (cf. Zech. 9:9): the Entry into Jerusalem  
Zephaniah (cf. Zeph. 3:8): the Resurrection  
Zechariah the younger [?]: the Ascension  
Joel (cf. Joel 2:28): Pentecost.

The painter used sophisticated Middle Byzantine models: the image of the Virgin in the Annunciation scene, standing before a walled garden while spinning thread, is an iconographic detail characteristic of the second half of the twelfth century. Certain elements in other scenes, however, might suggest localized, Coptic preferences: the presence of Gabriel alone among the apostles at the Ascension, the olive twigs in place of palm branches in the Entry into Jerusalem; the representation of fat-tailed sheep and trees common in Egypt localize and make the imported Byzantine models both personal and intimate. Most remarkable are the soulful faces of the prophets, apostles, and angels at the Baptism, whose features attest to the survival of the ancient eastern Mediterranean art of realistic (even ethnic) portraiture, which survived into icon painting in the Nile valley through the Middle Ages. The muted but warm



hues, achieved by the superimposition of transparent layers, produced a painting of such delicacy that it looks as if it might have been traced out and modeled by the smoke of incense—very different from the heraldic spectrum of brilliant primary colors characteristic of hieratic Middle Byzantine art. Despite certain stylistic elements associated with the later Byzantine period, it is tempting to

date this icon to around the time of Abu al-Makarim, squarely within the golden age of the Coptic-Arabic religious revival, which lasted from around 1150 until the mid-fourteenth centuries. Clearly, different styles of icon painting coexisted: this splendid narrative epistyle reflects the art of a vanished regional school.

The icon had been treated earlier, its blackened layer of varnish scratched off

in places with a sharp knife. It remained both under- and over-cleaned, the violence of the well-intended treatment attesting to haphazard methods predating scientific conservation. That the icon remained exceptionally well preserved despite this rough intervention and its less than ideal physical environment (above a spring in a church now five meters below ground level) was in itself miraculous.

The support is typical of Coptic icons: a sycamore panel, heavy and coarse with three horizontal traverses, which must have been manufactured *in situ* by local craftsmen.<sup>7</sup> The irregular surface of the wooden support was smoothed on both sides with a patchwork of plaster, palm fiber, and pieces of textile; it was then coated with raw gypsum, lacking any trace of binding medium or hardener, to form the icon's

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## Notes

The epistyle was treated in the framework of the Coptic Icons Project between 1993 and 1996 in cooperation with the Coptic Church, the Supreme Council of Antiquities, and the sponsor: the Government of the Netherlands. Credits are detailed in Skalova and Davis 2000. Another monumental thirteenth-century narrative icon—a cycle of the Life of Christ and the Virgin Mary—in the Church of Abu 'l Sayfayn in Old Cairo, bearing intriguing iconographic and stylistic similarities to the icon in the Church of the Holy Virgin, was conserved by trainees under my supervision in 1997-98 and awaits restoration.

1. See generally, Matthews 1998.
2. See, in English translation, Abu al-Makarim 1992, pp. 9-11.
3. See Villecourt 1925.
4. Millet, 1916, pp. 16 ff.
5. For other icons, see Zkalova, "Icon Painting under Arab and Mamluk Rule," and cats. 7-17, in Skalova and Gabra, forthcoming.
6. See Skalova 2001.
7. See Skalova 1996.
8. I am indebted to my Egyptian and Dutch colleagues for their expertise. The points that follow are based on the report on pigments, the nature of the preparation, and treatment recommendations by Mr. Pieter Hallebeek from the Central Laboratory, Amsterdam (13 June 1995), and the report on the varnish by Drs. Nasri Iskander and Shawki Nakhla (SCA, 18 April 1996).



groundlayer. Into this ground, contours were incised. The arcades were formed with narrow, half-round strips of bent and nailed hardwood, covered over with white plaster. Gold leaf was applied directly to the polished ground, laid over a thin layer of red ochre dispersed in water to allow burnishing.

Findings of the scientific analysis of the epistyle's materials, and the delicate manner in which these materials had been applied, precluded cleaning with liquid or with friction.<sup>8</sup> A very limited palette of locally available mineral pigments had been employed: lead white, carbon black, yellow and red ochres, finely ground azurite blue, vermillion, and a lead-based pale green.

Removing patches of black varnish from an irregularly cleaned icon is a

painstaking and slow process: we used compresses slightly dampened in a blend of solvents and suspended briefly over small sections of the icon to soften the thick resinous layer, which was then allowed to dry and carefully removed with a microscalpel under a binocular microscope. This process left the transparent modeling covered with a film of the original golden varnish layer. Icon conservation, by virtue of the object's holiness, raises particular complexities: icons are sacred "living" objects, whose absence is felt intensely by clergy and parishioners, a sentiment that sometimes clashes with the necessarily laborious process of scientific conservation. The removal of the dark encrustation from the surface of an old icon, moreover, is believed to obliterate the invis-

ble layers of sanctity accumulated through consecration, incense, and prayers; careful treatment guarantees that some of the "sacred deposit" remains preserved. Such theological dilemmas haunt modern icon conservation, which is based on profane scientific principles, worked out primarily for museum collections.

When the project and the extended permission to work on this icon ended in December 1997, the work had been conserved—that is, its peeling layers consolidated—but only a dozen faces had emerged from beneath the black varnish. The icon was fully cleaned from August to November 1999 by another team and was restored to its place on the screen in the Church of the Holy Virgin, where it now stands. ■

## Continuity and Innovation in Islamic Coinage

Jere L. Bacharach

JERE L. BACHARACH (jere@u.washington.edu) is professor of history at the University of Washington. His Egyptian sponsors for his 2000–2001 ARCE fellowship (carried out under the auspices of the Supreme Council of Antiquities and the Ministry of Higher Education), were Dr. Hassanein Rabie, professor of history and former vice-president, Cairo University and Dr. Raafat al-Nabarawy, dean of the College of Archaeology at Cairo University.

Perplexed, the tourist turned away from the Egyptian bank's exchange window, not fully comprehending why the U.S. hundred-dollar bill had been rejected. Standing in line behind him, I explained that the Egyptian official, even without having a clue who was portrayed on the bill or being able to read a single word of English, thought the money looked "wrong": the portrait of Benjamin Franklin was too small. Only new U.S. bills with the large, off-center portraits were being accepted in Egypt as well as most of the world. An innovation created by the U.S. government to stop the forging of the older U.S. paper money had created an international "monetary zone" in which only new-style bills were accepted at full value.

Although pre-modern all-epigraphic Islamic coins with inscriptions in

Arabic script may look alike to the first-time viewer, they, like the currently circulating old and new U.S. paper money, are not all the same. At specific times and places changes were introduced to Muslim coinage to render them sufficiently distinct from earlier circulating pieces so that those handling these Muslim issues on a regular basis could distinguish the new ones from others without having to read a single inscription. If the innovation spread and the coinage with the new design, script, or layout was widely accepted, a new monetary zone was created in which the new-style pieces circulated as the dominant currency. The goal of my ARCE project was to identify those historic moments when Muslim officials produced new-style Islamic gold dinars and silver dirhams, which, as they grew to be accepted as the dominant currency, created their

own monetary zones. I was particularly interested in the coinage of Egypt.

The first step involved distinguishing the degree to which the visual impact of these changes was significant or, rather, constituted a minor variation on existing themes. These categories reflected my own views; medieval textual sources that comment on changes in the look of coinage are rare. I also sought possible explanations for the innovations. Finally, I defined the chronological period and geographic areas in which the new dinars and dirhams circulated as the dominant coinage. Two examples suggest how these changes operate. The first dates from the end of the seventh century and begins in Syria; the second begins in the tenth century and initially appeared in North Africa and then Egypt.

Before the reign of the Umayyad caliph 'Abd al-Malik (AH 65–86/685–705 CE), Muslims relied on the coinage produced by the Byzantine empire—primarily gold or copper coins minted outside Muslim lands—and silver coins from Iraq and Iran, formerly under the control of the Persian Sasanian dynasty. During 'Abd al-Malik's caliphate, fiscal authorities introduced a series of major innovations, beginning in 72/691 as Muslims, rather than relying upon Byzantine and Sasanian issues, sought to establish their own gold and silver currency with its own ideological and religious messages. Experimental types produced included the portrait of a standing caliph, which represented 'Abd al-Malik. These experiments culminated in the introduction of an all-epigraphic dinar in 77/696 and a dirham in the same style two years later. These new dinars and dirhams are known as the post-reform or reformed coinage.

The new coinage was visually so distinct from its Byzantine and Sasanian predecessors that no one would have had any trouble identifying the coins as Islamic, even if the user could not read Arabic let alone the specific inscriptions. Each face of the gold and silver issues included a counterclockwise circular inscription, which was either Qur'anic or included information on the date of minting and, in the case of dirhams, the name of the mint. The center was filled with three or four parallel lines of text, which emphasized God's unity. For example, on both the dinar and dirham the center of the reverse included almost all of Sura 112, *Al-Iklas* (The Unity, or *al-Tawhid*), which rejected Christian Trinitarianism. It is easy to understand the choice of the Qur'anic material in terms of the Umayyad struggle against the Byzantine empire as well as the need to assert the supremacy of Islam over



the largely Christian Syrian population.

The inscriptions were engraved in a Kufic script, which lent itself to the type of vertical strokes needed for preparing coin dies and was also used by 'Abd al-Malik on his road markers and in the Dome of the Rock, probably because it was similarly suitable for stone-carved inscriptions. With the introduction of the new coinage, its fairly rapid replacement of all pre-reform types as the official currency of the Islamic world from North Africa to India and Central Asia, and its role in international trade, Kufic was established as a marker of Islam. Coinage, not the Qur'an, established Arabic script, and Kufic in particular, as a symbol of Islam within and outside the Muslim world.

In 132/750 the Abbasids overthrew the Umayyads and established their own rule. As part of their policy to legitimize their rule as members of the family of the Prophet Muhammad, unlike the Umayyads, the Abbasids dropped Sura 112 from the reverse and replaced it with the second part of the shahada, *Mubammad rasul Allah* (Muhammad is the Apostle of God). In all other respects the Kufic script and Qur'anic legends of the initial Abbasid coinage were identical to those used by the former dynasty.

Three words—*Mubammad rasul Allah*—were written in three lines, just as the longer Sura 112 had been inscribed on Umayyad coinage in three lines. Other than dates and mint names, the earliest Abbasid gold and silver coins (produced by eighteen different mints) were virtually identical to



Umayyad gold and silver coins for the next fifteen years. While the new inscription is very important for political history and the study of Abbasid ideology, what is most noteworthy is how small and subtle the difference is: there is no visual clue to alert the user that something radically new is on the coinage. One inscription inscribed in a tiny space of less than two centimeters written in a script read by relatively few and lacking diacritical marks was replaced by another inscription written in the same space, in the same three lines, and in the same script. Who but the most careful observer of the coinage would notice? To put it another way, the ideological message, for all its importance, was subsumed by the monetary role of the coinage. Abbasid coinage looked like Umayyad coinage because of its role in the market. It was only during the reign of the Abbasid Caliph al-Ma'mun (198–218/813–833) that a series of monetary innovations were introduced which ended the monetary reign of the Umayyad-style coinage.

The second example is associated with the Isma'ili Shi'ite rulers of North Africa, Egypt, and Syria known as the Fatimids. The Fatimid caliph-imam al-Mu'izz (341–65/953–75) changed the layout of the inscriptions from the circulating Abbasid model and created a visually distinct coinage. Beginning in 343/955 in al-Mansuriya, Tunisia, the design on the majority of Fatimid coinage was composed of concentric circles of inscriptions in Kufic script carrying Shi'ite messages. The center was

Umayyad dinar, reign of 'Abd al-Malik, minted at Damascus, AH 77 (696/99 CE); gold, 4.252 gr. Actual diam. 1.9 cm. Courtesy of The American Numismatic Society, New York (acc. no. 1002.1.406)





Ayyubid dinar, reign of Saladin, minted at Cairo, AH 571 (1175/76 CE); gold, 4.012 gr. Actual diam. 2.2 cm. Courtesy of The American Numismatic Society, New York (acc. no. 1002.1.1028)

either blank or contained a dot. This new-style coinage was then introduced into Egypt in 358/969 and then in greater Syria as far north as Damascus when these lands came under Fatimid control. The choice of this particular design and its inscribed messages was not an arbitrary decision: both had very specific Isma'ili meanings.

Irene A. Bierman (in *Writing Signs: The Fatimid Public Text* [Berkeley 1998], pp. 62–70) was the first to associate the concentric circle design with Isma'ili ideology. The center symbolized the ultimate truth known only to the caliph-imam. In this semiotic reading of the coin, all Believers (in an Isma'ili *sehse*) occupied the inner incised circle. Muslims comprised the outer circle or circles: all Believers were Muslims, but not all Muslims were Believers (Isma'ilis). Even the ordering of the inscriptions paralleled this sense of hierarchy as one moved from the general mint-date formula or a Qu'ranic verse acceptable to all Muslims on the outer circle, to messages meaningful to Isma'ili Shi'ite in the inner circle(s). Since the Fatimid dinars were also almost pure gold, the new concentric-style coinage, known as the bullseye design, came to dominate the trade of the eastern Mediterranean. These bullseye coins with their blank centers are more difficult to read than earlier Muslim coinage since there are no visual clues as to where an inscription begins in terms of top versus bottom or left versus right. Perhaps this relative difficulty enhanced their mystery and tie to Isma'ili Shi'ism.



The coinage of the Fatimid ruler al-Hakim (386–411/996–1021) included a number of experiments, including a brief return to Abbasid-style issues, but settled into a modified bullseye-style pattern with the addition of a two-line text in the center of two concentric circles. One center included his title; the other side of the coin was inscribed with a statement meaningful to Isma'ilis. Al-Hakim's innovation, which became the dominant but not sole model for the coinage of succeeding Fatimid caliphs, also had a major impact upon a user's ability to "read" the coinage. With the introduction of the central inscription, there was a visual clue as to where the marginal inscriptions began. In that sense, some of coin's mystery disappeared. In fact, with al-Hakim's changes the original sophisticated, text-based semiotic meaning of the coinage was lost, which is not surprising since the original model had been introduced more than forty years earlier.

Finally, Saladin (567–89/1171–93) brought an end to Fatimid Shi'ite rule in Egypt in 567/1171 in his capacity as vassal for the Sunni ruler of Syria. The inscriptions on his Egyptian dinars acknowledged the overlordship of both the Syrian ruler and the Sunni Abbasid caliph by the inclusion of their names. Shi'ite statements disappeared from the inscriptions. But for all the political and religious history related to Saladin's career, which can be reconstructed from the inscriptional data, the dinars looked just like those of the preceding dynasty. Saladin continued to mint

Fatimid bullseye-style dinars so that his gold issues could pass easily in the market. In this case economics rather than politics or ideology was the critical element, and it was only in 596/1200 that one of Saladin's successors ended Fatimid-style coinage.

A number of conclusions can be drawn even from these two examples. First, an innovation in coinage carries a very strong ideological message in terms of both its inscribed data and its design. Even if its users could not read the Arabic, the coin's design announced its uniqueness. It is also very likely that whatever the reasons for choosing both the original design and the specific Qur'anic and pious phrases, knowledge of it was lost fairly quickly, assuming individuals outside the court even knew why particular elements had been chosen. A modern example of this phenomenon is how few individuals know who is portrayed on the new U.S. gold-colored dollar coin and why she is there; undoubtedly, even fewer individuals can identify Sacagewea's son Jean-Baptiste (portrayed on her back in a papoose). Returning to the medieval example, another factor is that the stability of political power and its economic success, including the issuing of coins with a high degree of purity, resulted in the creation of monetary zones in which the coinage of a particular dynasty dominated. Finally, in both cases, the design continued to be used by a succeeding dynasty because of the association of the older style of coinage with economic success in the monetary marketplace, not because the coin carried a particular religious message. Therefore identifying the life of a certain style of coinage solely on the basis of dynastic dates risks creating an inaccurate picture: the Umayyad/Abbasid issues and the Fatimid/Ayyubid issues were introduced after their respective dynasties were established and continued after the dynasty had ended. ■

## Borrowing or Stealing? The Use of *Spolia* in the Mosque Complex of Sultan al-Mu'ayyad Sheikh

Karen Rose Mathews

*Spolia*, or building elements appropriated from past and foreign cultures, were employed with great frequency in the architecture of Mamluk Cairo (1250–1517 CE). Mamluk structures display pharaonic stones with hieroglyphs as thresholds, employ late antique columns and capitals as supports, and sometimes even reuse building material from Crusader and earlier Islamic monuments. One of the most avid users of *spolia* was Sultan al-Mu'ayyad Sheikh, who ruled from 1412 to 1421, and the extent of his appropriation of architectural elements from other structures in his eponymous mosque in Cairo, noted and commented on by some of his contemporaries, has implications for the assessment of a Mamluk style of architecture.

The mosque complex of al-Mu'ayyad Sheikh, located near the Bab Zuwayla in Cairo, is exemplary in its large size and extensive decoration.<sup>1</sup> It occupies a considerable expanse of land just inside the southern city gate of Fatimid Cairo, and its main portal faces the central thoroughfare through the medieval city. The building complex thus stood in an area of great visibility within a city already crowded with lavish architectural monuments, and several structures were destroyed to accommodate al-Mu'ayyad's massive new building. The complex originally consisted of a mosque and tombs for the sultan and

his family. The mosque possessed a sanctuary/prayer hall area and three side aisles surrounding a central courtyard.<sup>2</sup> Only the prayer hall area of the mosque and the tombs survive; they are currently undergoing restoration.

The mosque's lavish decoration begins at the entrance portal, located on the main north-south axis of medieval Cairo. The portal consists of a hooded archway with a *muqarnas* half-dome, which towers over passers-by on the street. The doorway itself, believed to have been taken from a Roman building, is the first example of *spolia* that greets you as you enter the structure. Marble plaques with Kufic inscriptions flank the doorway, which also features alternating black and white stone (*ablaq* work) in the lintel above the door.

The most extravagant display of reused materials is found in the prayer hall area. The supports of the prayer hall are all late antique marble capitals and columns, presumably taken from Christian buildings in the area. The *qibla* wall of the prayer hall and the side walls of this area of the mosque are encrusted with sumptuous marble and stucco decoration. On the lower two-thirds of the wall, marble plaques ornament the surface, providing a dazzling array of shapes and colors. Among the forms traced in marble on the wall surface are rectangular panels, marble cir-



cles with intertwining borders, and small niches. The *qibla* wall is articulated by several recesses, seven in all, with three on each side of the *mibrab*, or prayer niche. These recesses are all decorated with marble paneling, with the most elaborate inlay work reserved for the *mibrab* in the center. Above the panels of marble mosaic are intricate designs in stucco.

The tomb structures themselves, less elaborately ornamented, are also decorated with *spolia*. Two tombs, containing the remains of the sultan and his son, occupy the northern mausoleum. The larger cenotaph belongs to al-Mu'ayyad Sheikh and is surrounded by a marble panel with an elaborate Kufic inscription. The cenotaph of the sultan's son features a similar, though smaller, marble panel. The style of these panels dates them to the Ikshidid or Fatimid period. These marble panels, then, were taken from an earlier Islamic structure and reused in Sultan al-Mu'ayyad's tomb within the mosque complex.

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Mosque of al-Mu'ayyad Sheikh: main portal, with bronze doors taken from the madrasa of Sultan Hasan. Photo: Karen Mathews



Mosque of al-Mu'ayyad  
Sheikh: the prayer hall.  
Photo: Karen Mathews

The appropriation of building materials for a structure the size of al-Mu'ayyad Sheikh's complex could occur in a number of ways, and this topic was the subject of much discussion in contemporary texts.<sup>3</sup> Ibn Taghribirdi recounts that the sultan "compelled the administrators of the government to provide excellent marble for his mosque; the marble was sought in every region, being taken even from dwellings, courts, and the places which were [known] as 'houses of joy.'"<sup>4</sup> Ibn Iyas claims that many people suffered greatly from this act, as officials attacked their houses and had stripped the marble from the walls.<sup>5</sup> Finally another author, al-Sakhawi, reports that a mosque that was in ruins in the southern cemetery was completely destroyed so that Sultan al-Mu'ayyad could use its marble for his complex.<sup>6</sup> As a result, Ibn Taghribirdi laments, "from that day marble became scarce in Egyptian houses because of the extent to which it was required by the size and width of this mosque."<sup>7</sup>

Although Sultan al-Mu'ayyad's methods for obtaining sufficient marble for his lavishly decorated structure were aggressive, none of these authors openly critiques the sultan for his Machiavellian tactics. Taking materials from contemporary structures—from



houses of amirs who had fallen out of favor or from edifices considered to be state property—was a common practice during the Mamluk period. It was the scale of al-Mu'ayyad's appropriation that was noteworthy, not necessarily his methods. There may also have existed state storehouses where precious stones and marbles were kept, and the sultan would have had free access to these sources of valuable materials.<sup>8</sup> In essence, most of the historical sources describing this building enterprise claim that this forceful seizure of materials was for a worthy cause: Ibn Taghribirdi, for example, boasts that al-Mu'ayyad's mosque was the most beautiful in Cairo "as regards its ornateness and its marble."<sup>9</sup> What made it so was in large part the use of *spolia*.

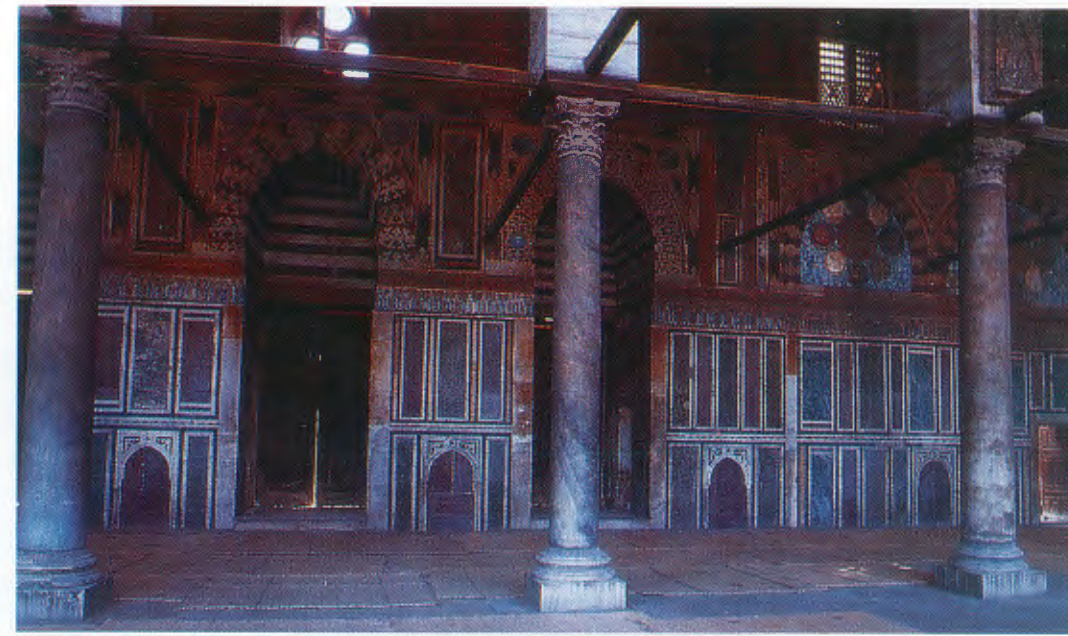
However, in his search for luxurious and ornate materials for his mosque

complex, Sultan al-Mu'ayyad may have crossed a culturally established boundary between the respectful referencing of the past and willful misappropriation of the present. To enhance the decoration of his structure, al-Mu'ayyad Sheikh took the bronze doors and a lamp from the madrasa of Sultan Hasan, another historically significant Mamluk structure that had fallen into disrepair. (The doors and lamp were in fact *purchased* for the paltry sum of five hundred dinars, but Islamic law prohibited such an alienation of property from a previously established pious foundation.)<sup>10</sup> As a consequence, this act of appropriation was roundly condemned by Mamluk historical writers. Ibn Taghribirdi wrote that "no fault was found with al-Malik al-Mu'ayyad in any phase of the building of this mosque except that he took the door

of the college mosque of Sultan Hasan and the candelabrum. . . . Al-Malik al-Mu'ayyad could have made one more beautiful than it because of his lofty aspiration; and in that [which he did] was a lack of manliness and propriety in many respects."<sup>11</sup>

Not all appropriation or use of *spolia* was condoned, and in some extraordinary cases this type of borrowing was recognized simply as stealing. This distinction reflects a multifaceted understanding of what appropriation from other cultures meant. A culture that was chronologically distant appears to have accrued positive associations, and appropriating objects from past cultures was condoned and even admired. Borrowing (or stealing) building materials from other Mamluk structures, however, caused some controversy in late medieval Cairo.

This leads to the question of whether one can ascertain in al-Mu'ayyad's mosque, or in Mamluk structures in general, a sense of style or an aesthetic sensibility for this period. Ibn Taghribirdi was particularly struck by the ornateness of al-Mu'ayyad's mosque, a structure that was lavishly decorated with a variety of materials—marble, faience, wood, ivory, and metal. He notes that where other structures might compete with al-Mu'ayyad's mosque in their solid construction and size, al-Mu'ayyad's structure surpasses them in its "ornamental quality." Ibn Taghribirdi goes so far as to assert the superiority of its ornament to that of the Great Mosque of Damascus, one of the most impressive and sumptuously decorated structures in all of the Islamic world.<sup>12</sup> Therefore, a direct connection to the past informed the viewing of Mamluk monuments in Cairo, and the Mamluk sultans responded to architecture of the past with a sense of rivalry and respect.



*Spolia* served as the central mechanism in Mamluk architecture for establishing a direct connection to the past, alluding both to illustrious past cultures and to contemporary adversaries whom the Mamluks had defeated. *Spolia* in al-Mu'ayyad's mosque constitute the majority of decoration in the structure, and were the decorative elements noted with approval by writers such as Ibn Taghribirdi. The combination of literary and visual evidence provides documentation for a distinct aesthetic attitude in the Mamluk period. This concept of beauty centered on valuable raw materials and extensive, colorful decoration placed on the exterior and interior of a structure. Mamluk sultans and amirs lavished exorbitant sums and precious materials on their architectural commissions, for these buildings were important bearers of meaning in Mamluk Cairo. *Spolia* were a forceful expression of cultural superiority and political hegemony, and they were used in Cairo by the Mamluks, a foreign dynasty, to construct a Mediterranean past that emphasized the Mamluks' role as the successors to all the cultures whose works they appropriated. ■

#### NOTES

1. The mosque's history is described in Meinecke 1992, vol. 2, p. 319, no. 29/15. See Meinecke as well for bibliography until approximately 1992. Works on this structure not cited in Meinecke include Swelim 1986 and Abd al-'Alim 1994.
2. Behrens-Abouseif 1989, pp. 138. See Creswell 1919, pp. 120–21, for nineteenth-century attempts to restore the side aisles; Abd al-'Alim 1979, esp. p. 295, mentions these restorations as well.
3. In addition to the chroniclers quoted below, Abd al-'Alim 1979, p. 287, cites the historians al-Maqizi and Ibn Iyas as sources.
4. Abu l-Mahasin ibn Taghribirdi, *Al-Nujum al-zahira fi muluk Misr wa-l-Qahira*, trans. William Popper in *History of Egypt 1382–1469 A.D.* (Berkeley 1957), vol. 17, p. 41.
5. Muhammad b. Ahmad Ibn Iyas, *Bada'i al-zuhur fi waya'i al-duhur* (Cairo 1894), II/1, 20, cited by Swelim 1986, p. 111.
6. Muhammad al-Sakhawi, *Tuhfat al-Ahbab wa bugyat al-tullab fi Hkhatat wa Hmazarat wa Htaragim wa Hbiqa* (Cairo 1937), p. 102, cited by Swelim 1986, p. 111.
7. Ibn Taghribirdi, *Al-Nujum al-zahira*, trans. Popper, in *History of Egypt*, 17:41.
8. Meinecke-Berg 1985, esp. p. 135.
9. Ibn Taghribirdi, trans. Popper, in *History of Egypt*, 17:41.
10. Creswell 1919, p. 121; Behrens-Abouseif 1989, p. 139.
11. Ibn Taghribirdi, trans. Popper, in *History of Egypt*, 17:41.
12. Ibn Taghribirdi, trans. Popper, in *History of Egypt*, 17:89.

Mosque of al-Mu'ayyad  
Sheikh: the wall of the  
qibla. Photo: Karen  
Mathews

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## Antoine Selim Nahas and the Face of Modern Cairo

This article is adapted from a lecture on Antoine Selim Nahas presented by Ola Seif and Seif El Rashidi as part of ARCE's Wednesday-evening seminar series. Ms. Seif and Mr. El Rashidi are art historians working in Cairo. Ms. Seif is employed by the National Center for Documentation of Cultural and Natural Heritage, and Mr. El Rashidi by the Aga Khan Cultural Services—Egypt. They are preparing a study of the life and career of Antoine Selim Nahas.



Lintel of the Inji Zadeh building (1939), Sharia Ramses, one of the few Antoine Selim Nahas structures that bears his signature and credentials. The plaque below identifies the building as the endowment (*waqf*) of Dr. Isma'il Shukry and Inji Zadeh. Photo: Ola Seif

If you did nothing more than glance at it today, shrouded in Cairo's yellowish brown dust, fretted with cables and air-conditioning units, and swept up in the constant flow of Cairo's traffic, you might not take in the simple elegance of the building that the American Research Center in Egypt occupies at 2 Midan Simón Bolívar (formerly Kasr al-Dubara). If you looked harder, though, you might notice details in the building's unusual, understated beauty: a lotus motif on the wrought-iron balcony railings, sustained on the five-meter-high gilded bronze and aluminum doors and elevator grilles; magnificent, two-story entrance halls, cloaked in travertine marble revet-

ment; the clean sweep of stucco lines accentuated by the play of light and shadow.

The al-Chams building, named for the company that commissioned it in 1946, was designed by Antoine Selim Nahas (1901–66), a Greek-Catholic Egyptian architect of Syrian-Lebanese origin. Nahas's buildings, which span a twenty-seven-year career, had a profound and lasting effect on Cairo's skyline. The city, which grew at an astonishing rate over the course of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, had until the 1930s only rarely risen above four or five stories, punctuated by the occasional minaret. Its downtown was dominated by build-

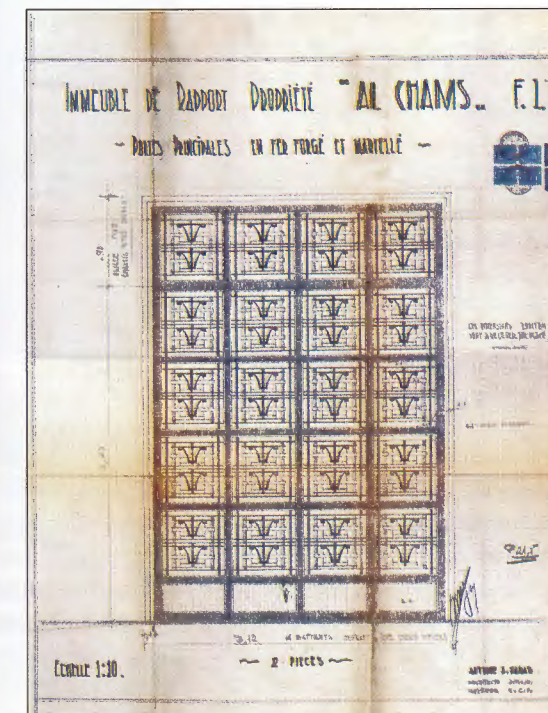
ings commissioned by a wealthy population who looked primarily to low-slung European Belle Époque models for their *grands immeubles*. Nahas and his contemporaries and disciples changed Cairo's look forever: his buildings rise exuberantly—ten, thirteen, even fifteen stories above the street; they call attention to themselves by virtue of their size, and they grace Cairo's business district with a true urban architecture whose sleek lines, subtle geometry, restrained ornamentation, and monumental size must have astonished residents accustomed to the confectionery Italianate style that survives in pockets in Garden City, Zamalek, and Heliopolis.

Born in Cairo on 27 August 1901 to a wealthy banking family, and educated at the Collège des Frères in Cairo, the young Nahas won a scholarship in 1920 to the École Centrale des Arts et des Manufactures in Paris. After his graduation in 1925, he enrolled in the École des Beaux Arts, where while still a student in 1930 he received his first commission—Lebanon's National Museum—by winning an international juried competition. The museum (which appears on the back of the Lebanese five-lira note) is, somewhat quixotically, the only "Egyptian"-style building that Nahas ever designed, made so by virtue of its portico of massive columns surmounted by lotus capitals and its two pylonlike wings.

His reputation assured by his precocious success in Beirut, Nahas returned to Cairo, where he set up practice in a downtown office on Sharia Kasr el-Nil. Private commissions followed rapidly, fueled by Cairo's development boom. Nahas's clients were largely wealthy magnates who had made their fortune in trade and industry. His sole royal commission—the Doqqi Shooting Club—was in part the result of his reputation, but due also to the passion for marksmanship that Nahas shared with King Farouk. Nahas was highly regarded and sought-

after: over the course of twenty-seven years, he designed, by our count, no fewer than forty buildings, the majority of which are concentrated in Cairo's downtown (the area extending from the Islamic city westward to the Nile); at least five of his buildings are situated on or near the Giza Corniche, an area that was beginning to attract Egypt's moneyed class early in the 1950s. That many of his buildings are now obscured by the urban fabric that has mushroomed around them is a result, in part, of the eventual dominance of the architectural style that Nahas himself introduced. They were, nonetheless, buildings designed to impress and, fronting large open spaces on major avenues or intersections, to call attention to themselves: the 1934 Aziz Bahari buildings on Midan al-Tahrir (formerly Ismailia Square), the 1937 Aziz Bahari buildings on Midan Mustafa Kamel, the Inji Zadeh building, completed in 1939, on Sharia Ramses (formerly Avenue al-Malika Nazli). It is ironic, perhaps, that their architect was himself extremely shy and retiring; we have traced only two instances of signatures on Nahas buildings, and they are not easily seen, effectively concealed over the lintels. Even his children were unaware until long after his death that Farouk had awarded him the title of *bey* in gratitude (and payment) for his design of the Shooting Club.

By the 1950s Nahas was widely recognized as one of Egypt's leading architects: he was appointed chief archi-



Far left: Stairwell of the Aziz Bahari building overlooking Midan Mustafa Kamel. Photo: Ola Seif

Near left: Elevation by Antoine Selim Nahas of the nearly five-meter-high main doors (now lost) of the al-Chams building. Courtesy Ola Seif and Seif El Rashidi



The Inji Zadeh building, completed in 1939, on Sharia Ramses (formerly Avenue al-Malika Nazli). Photo courtesy Selim Nahas

rect of the ministry of education and given a professorship at Fouad I University, where he taught architecture in the faculty of fine arts. With the Free Officers coup in 1952, the nationalization of many of his clients' enterprises, and the closing of the faculty of fine arts in 1956, however, commissions in Egypt began to grow scarce. His reputation in Beirut, where many of his friends and patrons had moved in the wake of the sequestration laws, led to several commissions there; after two years in Rome, where he worked on a large urban development project, Nahas moved to Beirut, where he was appointed dean of the Institut National des Beaux Arts du Liban; one of his projects was an expansion of the very museum that had launched his career. Antoine Selim Nahas died in Beirut on 15 November 1966.

By virtue, perhaps, of his training, the early style of Nahas's Cairo buildings reflected architectural currents in Europe prevalent during his student days: one can distinguish in buildings from the 1930s elements of the German Bauhaus style, of Le Corbusier's modernism, and of Italian Futurism in the dominance of the straight, simple line and the use of twentieth-century materials (steel, reinforced concrete, and aluminum). Nahas, however, developed a highly personal architectural style over the course of his career. The structures are almost uniformly "built large," even when their height was restricted by client's budgets or local ordinances. The al-Chams building that ARCE occupies exemplifies many characteristics that are evident throughout Nahas's career: the building's U-shaped structure, curving around a central courtyard, maximizes residents' access to light and air, and originally, on its long, west-



facing side, gave its occupants a view of the Nile. Paired two-story entrances offer grand access to the separate halves of the building. Whereas older Cairene buildings typically contain ten or so small apartments, Nahas's apartment buildings comprise on average 150 large units (the original design of the al-Chams building provided for fifty separate apartments), intended to house

Cairo's growing affluent population. Like the al-Chams building, the structures are often mixed-use—retail stores or offices occupy the ground floor, which rises to an equivalent of two stories—and they are sited at important street junctions, affording the commercial tenants and residents ready access to the opportunities afforded by the city. Ornamentation is restrained

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(the ironwork lotus motif is characteristic of Nahas's work from the 1940s) and relies largely on the play of Cairo's bright sunlight over recessed lines of stucco.

Nahas left few personal records—we came upon some of his blue-

prints (including those for 2 Kasr al-Dubara) by chance in a downtown Cairo junkshop—and nothing in the manner of a Corbusierian manifesto or *ars architectura*: he was far too modest to aspire to such self-importance. What we know of his oeuvre,

however, speaks very much to a vision of Egypt's capital as a twentieth-century metropolis: it is the architecture of the new Cairo—a city whose importance warrants the monumental scale of his buildings. We can only speculate whether Nahas foresaw that his commissions might over time be enveloped as they have been by structures of equal or even larger scale, albeit often by less-talented architects building in the style that he helped introduce, to create the tight fabric of a bustling downtown; it's unlikely he would have imagined that they would be enveloped by the dusty grisaille of the city, or that his clean lines would be broken and coarsened by the accretion of flyovers, shop-signs, terrace enclosures, and flashing billboards. Perhaps, though, Nahas was also creating an architecture that looked to Egypt's history and acknowledged the "Egyptianness" of Cairo: it inheres at the most visible level in the occasional allusions in his ornamental ironwork to the lotus blossom of remote antiquity made new by its context. Perhaps it inheres as well in the way Nahas's buildings invite Egypt's dazzling sunlight to dance off the angles of their architecture. Ultimately, though, it may be the monumentality of Antoine Selim Nahas's edifices that ties them most closely to Egypt's past: a paradoxical statement by a self-effacing architect that these are indeed buildings of great importance. ■

Ola Seif and Seif El Rashidi wish to express their gratitude to Mr. Selim Nahas, Antoine Selim Nahas's son, who generously provided them with photographs and information about his father's life and career. They are grateful too to Mme. Maryse Helal for her support during their research and to Charles Dibble for his editorial counsel. An article tracing Nahas's life and career, written by Issandr El Amrani, appears in the 3–9 May 2001 issue of *Cairo Times* ([www.cairotimes.com](http://www.cairotimes.com)).

The Inji Zadeh building in 2001. Photo Ola Seif



# exhibitions

1.  
A Royal (?) Woman  
Egyptian alabaster  
Old Kingdom, 4th Dynasty  
(ca. 2613–2566 BCE)  
Provenance unknown  
H. 48.7 cm.  
© Trustees of The British  
Museum. Courtesy American  
Federation of Arts

2.  
Statuette of Osiris  
Dark green graywacke  
Early 26th Dynasty  
(650–640 BCE)  
35.9 x 9.0 x 18 cm.  
Courtesy of the Thalassic  
Collection, Ltd.  
Photo: Bruce White

3.  
Small Hathor Capital  
Limestone  
New Kingdom, 18th Dynasty  
(1550–1307 BCE)  
From Deir el-Bahri  
25.5 x 15.25 x 10.25 cm.  
Lent by The University of  
Pennsylvania Museum of  
Archaeology and  
Anthropology (E 11816)

4.  
Ewer  
Transparent light green over  
colorless glass  
Blown, cased, cut, and drilled  
ca. 1000 CE  
Western Asia or Egypt  
H. at rim 16 cm.; max.  
diam. 9.3 cm.  
The Corning Museum of  
Glass. © The Metropolitan  
Museum of Art, New York

The following list of exhibitions at ARCE member institutions or affiliated museums is derived from descriptive material provided by the organizers. The fall and subsequent issues of the *Bulletin* will include a full calendar of events; we ask readers to send notices of upcoming symposia, conferences, and lecture series to [arce@internetegypt.com](mailto:arce@internetegypt.com) (attention: Publications).

**The Brooklyn Museum of Art, New York**  
*Eternal Egypt: Masterworks of Ancient Art from The British Museum*  
23 November 2001–24 February 2002



Organized by the American Federation of Arts and The British Museum, and selected by Edna R. Russman, the exhibition comprises 144 objects from the British Museum's Department of Egyptian Antiquities, including little-known pieces from the study collection. The exhibition and its notional tour are made possible by Ford Motor Company. Additional support has been provided by the Benefactors Circle of the American Federation of Arts. For other venues, consult the BMA's website ([www.brooklynart.org](http://www.brooklynart.org)).

**Emory University, Atlanta: The Michael C. Carlos Museum**  
*The Collector's Eye: Masterpieces of Egyptian Art from the Thalassic Collection, Ltd.* (courtesy Theodore and Aristeia Halkedis)  
Through 6 January 2002



Comprising more than 175 objects, the Thalassic collection of ancient Egyptian art ranges from monumental statues of pharaohs to exquisitely-crafted jewels. The show marks this outstanding collection's first public exhibition.

*Galleries of Ancient Egypt, Nubia, and Near Eastern Art*  
Opening permanently October 2001  
This new installation features the Carlos Museum's acquisition of an important collection of ancient Egyptian artifacts from the Niagara Falls Museum in Canada; the objects represent an overview of the development of funerary art in Egypt during its most inventive and prolific period. [www.emory.edu/carlos](http://www.emory.edu/carlos)

**The University of Memphis Art Museum, Tennessee**



*Gods of Ancient Memphis*  
28 July–4 October 2001  
Organized by Stephen Harvey and Melinda Hartwig of the Institute of Egyptian Art and Archaeology at the University of Memphis, the exhibition focuses on religious worship in ancient Memphis. The show will feature works of art drawn from the institute's collection and objects from the University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology. [www.memphis.edu/egypt](http://www.memphis.edu/egypt)

**The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York**  
*The Pharaoh's Photographer: Harry Burton, Tutankhamun, and the Metropolitan's Egyptian Expedition*  
11 September–30 December 2001  
The exhibition displays some sixty photographs taken between 1906 and 1936 by members of the Metropolitan Museum's Egyptian Expedition, the majority of them by Harry Burton (1879–1940), the outstanding archaeological photographer of his day. All phases of Burton's work in Egypt will be illustrated, including rare film footage documenting the Museum's Egyptian Expedition and the opening of Tutankhamun's tomb.

*Along the Nile: Early Photographs of Egypt*  
11 September–30 December 2001  
This installation of approximately 45 nineteenth-century photographs of Egypt will include some of the earliest camera images of Egypt's dramatic landscapes by the first generation of photographers working in Egypt.

*Glass of the Sultans*  
2 October 2001–13 January 2002  
The exhibition, a collaboration between the Metropolitan Museum and the Corning Museum of Glass, includes approximately 150 spectacular glass objects from the Islamic period. The exhibition is made pos-

sible by the Hagop Kevorkian Fund and the National Endowment for the Arts. [www.metmuseum.org](http://www.metmuseum.org)



**University of Michigan, Ann Arbor: The Kelsey Museum of Archaeology**  
*The Fabric of Everyday Life: Historic Textiles from Karanis*  
28 September–23 December 2001  
The exhibition explores daily life in Roman Egypt by displaying a wide range of archaeological, visual, and written materials. The textile artifacts exhibited shed light on the everyday concerns and domestic activities of the inhabitants of Karanis.

*Cavafy's World*  
21 February–5 May 2002  
The exhibition brings from Greece a selection of the manuscripts of Constantine P. Cavafy (1863–1933), universally regarded as the most important twentieth-century poet writing in Greek, displayed with objects from the museum's collection. [www.umichigan.edu/~kelseydb](http://www.umichigan.edu/~kelseydb)

**Museum of Fine Arts, Boston**  
Traveling exhibition  
*Masterworks from the Age of the Pyramids* will open in mid-September 2001 at the Nagoya Museum, Japan, and travel in the United States during 2002 as *Egypt in the Age of the Pyramids: Highlights from the Harvard University-Museum of Fine Arts Expedition*. Consult the MFA's website ([www.mfa.org](http://www.mfa.org)) for dates and venues.